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# MAY 15, 1991 - DU H



The party is banking on its massive cadre mobilisation for a dramatic increase in seats, but this requires a major swing in public opinion.



# SELECTED CHANGES Rothmans

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THIS election has brought to the fore several fundamental issues which will affect the shape of Indian society in the future. However, rational discussion on these important subjects either gets lost or distorted in the din of election rhetoric. To prevent this from happening, INDIA TODAY decided to have a series of roundtables on these issues by inviting a wide cross-section of persons with varying perspectives who are well-

versed in the subject to discuss them in an informal closeddoor atmosphere. An edited version of the discussions will be published in our subsequent issues under the title of 'Crossfire'. Subjects selected for the round-tables are: secularism, reservations, economy and federalism.

In this issue we reproduce the discussions of the roundtable on secularism. Though sparks flew every now and then, the discussions were stimulating and informative. Participants at extreme ends of the political spectrum gave each other a patient hearing, yet were quick to set forth their own arguments and contentions. There was a spontaneous flow to the exchanges, and the subject was debated in a spirited fashion.

It was encouraging to note that all the participants, despite subscribing to different ideologies, were virtually unanimous in emphasising synthesis over separateness. The key word used to describe Indian culture was

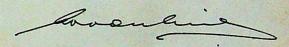


Participants at debate on secularism

'syncretic'. While the individual identities of the different communities were the subject of intense discussion, in the last count it was the general amity and shared heritage between Hindus and Muslims that was stressed. Differences in perception, however, occurred when the discussion focused on how all this history translated itself into what constitutes 'Indianness' today. But all the participants were unanimous in

condemning the use by political parties of the secular question' for vote-grabbing ends.

The sessions yielded six hours of recordings which proved a nightmare for the transcribers and editors. Unfortunately, we are unable to publish the discussions in their entirety, but may do so later in a book form. Personally I was very impressed by the depth of knowledge on the particular subject which existed amongst the participants. It is indicative of the enormous intellectual talent that exists in this country. Unfortunately, the ideas of the thinkers do not seem to find enough reflection in meaningful public debate and conduct. We hope the publication of these discussions will help bridge this gap.



# IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT



# Aiming High

The BJP is trying to use the mandir issue and its new slogan, 'give us a chance', to stake a claim at the Centre. This may not yet happen, but the bottom line for the party is to improve upon its 1989 performance. COVER STORY ......26



# A Fatal Obsession

The Pakistan People's Party is in a bad way as former prime minister Benazir Bhutto gets increasingly involved in trying to save the skin of husband Asif Zardari who is in prison facing criminal charges.

SPECIAL REPORT......76



# An Open Embrace

A sexual glasnost of sorts is breezing through the country with dating among lovers from the middle and lower classes becoming widespread. Furtive twosomes are everywhere as taboo liaisons burgeon.

SPECIAL FEATURE......142

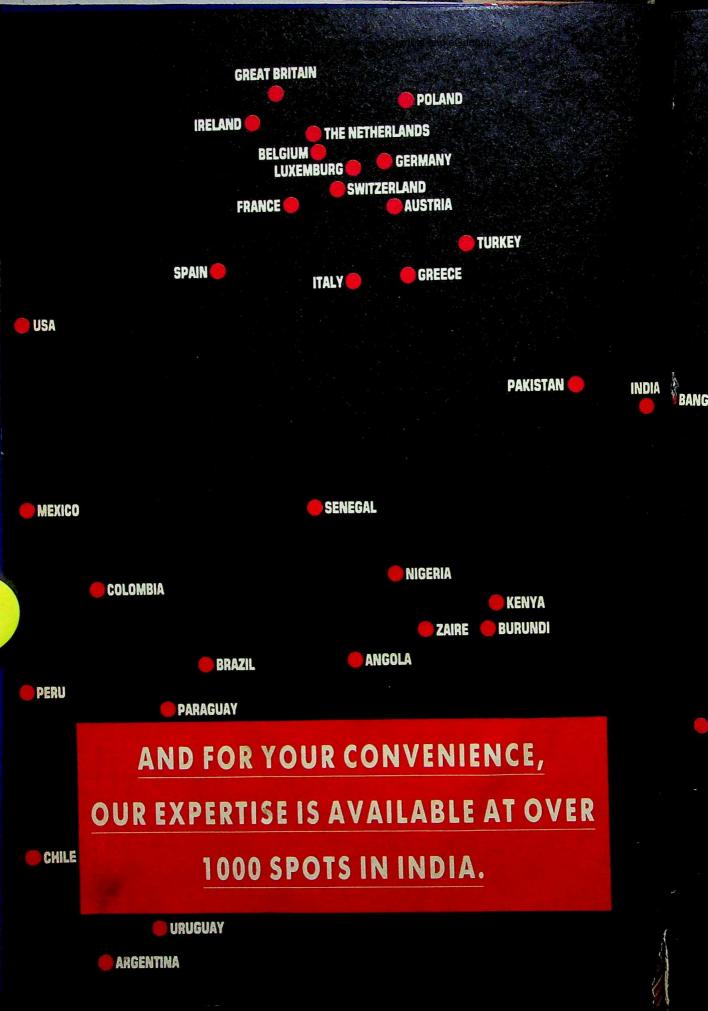
CONTENTS

COMMENT	90 mag 20
CAPITALOON	9
COVER STORY	13
Aiming High	
Pakistan Prima Na FORTNIGHT	26
Nawaz Sharief	En

SPECIAL REPORTS	60
BUSINESS FEATURE	
Hazira: The Pangs of Growth	82
BUSINESS	
BUSINESS BRIEFS	
CROSSFIRE	
Debate on Secularism:	
Contentious Crado	

SPECIAL FEATURE	No. of the
Dating: An Open Embrace	142
SPORTS	158
CINEMA	162
BOOKS	167
EYE-CATCHERS	176

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# CONTRADICTIONS PREVAIL

The analysis of the Congress(I)'s prospects in the coming mid-term elections to the Lok Sabha ("Rising Expectations", April 30) is convincing. The party certainly has a star performer in Rajiv Gandhi. Though the party has changed in some ways, the fact that it is encouraging defections left, right and centre from other parties leaves a bad taste in the mouth. AHMED FARAZ Jaunpur

# THE CIRCUS TROUPE

The cover cartoon (April 15) has shown politicians as circus performers. Just as circus performances have been banned under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, there should be a ban on politicians contesting elections under a "prevention of cruelty to voters act, 1991"

Madras

ANUPAMA BYRAN

### PRETENDERS ALL

"Earthy Rhetoric, Chatty Style" (April 15) exposes the National Front poll strategy. A band of unreliable people came to Patna on March 18, joined hands and waved to the masses, making the extravagant claim that they were capable of forming a stable government.

Patna

DEEPALI SINHA

■ If V.P. Singh would categorically state that in the event of a National Front-Left victory, a member from the Scheduled Castes or the Other Backward Castes would be chosen prime minister, it would go a long way in dispelling the misgiving that Singh's offer is not a mere populist election gimmick.

Hyderabad

MEENA DEVI

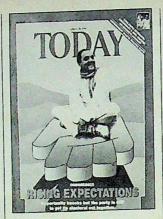
C.K.O

# IMPRACTICAL ADVICE

Your advice to the people ("Seize the Agenda". April 15) is not really helpful. India's millions are not an organised force. To raise issues, to offer solutions, they need a leader, a banner, they need a platform, an outlet. There are no leaders of the stature of Mahatma Gandhi around. Banners have taken saffron and other garish hues. Platforms are creaking under the weight of casteism. The outlet-the press-is gagged with its own self-righteousness.

# **COSTLY FAILURE**

It is terrifying to read what the Indians in Kuwait experienced during the Gulf war ("Tales of Trauma", April 15). Our external affairs minister sacrificed long-term



The report on the mid-term poll reminded me of an old man's remark: we Indians get a government we can tolerate and not the one we deserve.

Sachin, Gujarat

M. R. SHROFF

While pessimists are predicting a hung Parliament, hopefully the Indian voter will give a decisive mandate to one party or to a cohesive combination.

Bangalore

D.B.N. MURTHY

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advantages for immediate gains. One cannot look for miracles in foreign policy. This proved to be a costly failure.

Mangalore

VISHWANATH

■ The anger of Kuwait is quite justified. However, Kuwaiti Indians should have been the last to be targeted for the follies committed by the Indian Government. It should not be forgotten that they have worked extremely hard to build modern Kuwait. And they have suffered just as much as the native Kuwaitis during the war. It is unfortunate that they are now being labelled as 'outsiders'.

Patna

JAYA PRASAD

# MISLED BY FANATICS

Muslims have a misconception about the BJP because they are misled by the fanatical statements of leaders like Shahi Imam Abdullah Bukhari ("Living in Fear", April 15). What's wrong if Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Sunderlal Patwa sends a Diwali card with Lord Ram's picture on it? Is Diwali not a Hindu festival?

Nagpur

RAMESH UPADHYAY

# FIND ALTERNATIVES

Even if the Government acts fast, which is highly doubtful, India can never attain self-sufficiency in petrol unless a miracle takes place ("Sticky Situation", April 15). The only thing to do is to find alternatives to petrol and diesel. Natural gas which is being flared away can be converted into CNG (compressed natural gas) and used as fuel in the transport sector.

New Delhi

R.V. RAMACHANDRAN

# UNIUST CRITICISM

While indulging in self-flagellation regarding the forex problem ("Behind the Forex Trap", April 15), the authors got carried away in criticising George Fernandes for asking Coca-Cola and IBM to dilute their investments in India or quit. Should we allow foreign investment in the manufacture of biscuits, toothpaste, soap, typewriters? Ramesh Chauhan rightly asks why can India not invite foreign investment for better things than potato. chips and other junk food of the US.

C.D. BHANUSHALI

# DISGRACEFUL ACT

"Returning in Shame" (March 31) echoed the sentiments of the people. Voters are really angry with the disgraceful way in which the MPs sought to increase their allowances hurriedly on the last day of the Lok Sabha session. The voters should see to

Jaipur

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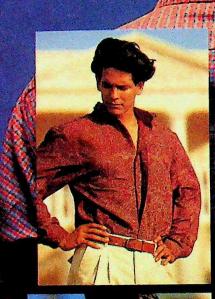
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LIKE THE CHECKS, BUT NOT IN THIS

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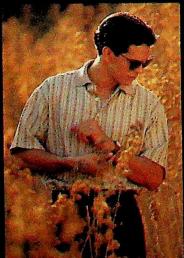
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it that all the MPs contesting the elections lose their deposits.

Bombay

L.D. KHATAU

# NO SOLAR COOKERS

You cannot compare India and Israel ("Dollar Chase", March 31). While Israel has solar cookers in every house, we are still producing new designs on paper to attract government subsidies. Unless element of sincerity is brought into the governance, the situation won't improve. Arcadia, USA ASHUTOSH GARG

# NOT BUDDHISTS ALONE

It is surprising that Sri Lanka is referred to as the 'Land of the Buddhists' ("Explosive Setback", March 31). Sri Lanka, like India, is a multi-racíal and multi-religious society. There are Buddhists, Hindus, Christians and Muslims in the island. Though Buddhists are found only among the Sinhalese, there are a large number of Sinhalese who are not Buddhists.

Colombo, Sri Lanka

P. CHRISTIE JOSEPH

# NO CAUSE FOR REGRET

In his column (March 31), S. Nihal Singh "regrets" that no Indian paper is represented either in Moscow or in Beijing. There ought to be no cause for such regret. The Times of India has had Vyacheslav Kostikov, a political analyst, writing exclusively for the paper from Moscow for more than six months. During this time he has reported significant events such as the Gorbachev-Yeltsin rivalry, all of which were prominently displayed in all our editions.

New Delhi

RAMESH CHANDRAN.

Foreign Editor, The Times of India



After assuming the role of global policeman in the Gulf crisis, if the US doesn't show any concern for Palestine and Tibet, it will be clear it is only an oil protector.

Ibadan, Nigeria NEENU S. SOHI

Ironically, I mistook the cover showing politicians as circus performers for the children's magazine. Target.

Bhopal

SHIV GAUR

### RURAL RUSE

The article on rural quacks ("Conning the Ignoramus", March 31) deserves applause for its roundup of the grim faces of this shady business, whose pretensions have tricked the minds of the rural people. Calcutta AFZAL F. HAFIZ

# DIFFERENT YARDSTICKS

There seem to be two kinds of criminal laws in the country. One for the rulers, one for the ruled. When Mrs Indira Gandhi was killed by her security guards, they were hanged. But when policemen kill villagers ("Kunda Killings", February 28)—not one but 13-the policemen are merely suspended. Why didn't they suspend Mrs Gandhi's assassins likewise?

Calcutta

MAHESH KUMAR RATHI

## **CBSE ANOMALIES**

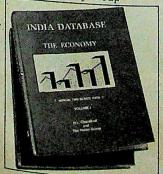
I am glad you have exposed the many anomalies in the CBSE examination system ("Erratic Evaluations", February 28). As a parent it is distressing to find that besides the lack of standardisation of marks, which puts humanities students at a disadvantage, the syllabus gets changed every year and books are not available until a few months before the board exams. Isn't it time the ministry took stern corrective action against the CBSE's arbitrary attitudes? New Delhi USHA ALBUQUERQUE

### CORRECTION

In "Comment" (April 15) it was inadvertently mentioned that I.K. Gujral was elected from Ludhiana. Gujral was, however, elected from Jalandhar. The error is regretted.

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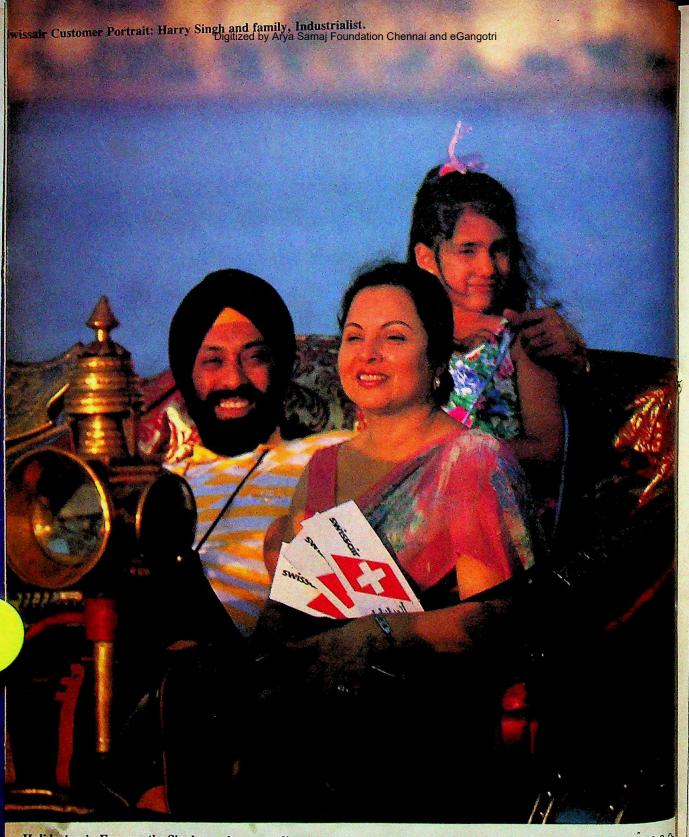
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US

# Voters' Medicine

HE Indian voter is poll-fatigued. Part of the reason is his
increasing disgust with an electoral process that repeatedly seems
to bring back into power the rascals
he thinks he is throwing out. This
has generated a dangerously widespread feeling about the futility of
improving the system through the
ballot. And this cynicism severely
damages democracy's very ethos.
What, you may ask, is the remedy?

The most obvious one is to seek out and vote only for candidates of proven integrity. This is admittedly a tall order. Where do you find them

in a system that has proven itself to be self-perpetuating and incestuous? But then, change never occurs without a massive participation of the people in the process of change. It requires commitment, belief, and tenacity.

Every voter, perhaps, needs to become a Diogenes. His most fundamental duty—in wanting the system to work—should be to mount unrelenting pressure on all political parties to run candidates combining exemplary track records with a sense of dedication to public service. Political parties justify their failure to accomplish this with the excuse that they are forced to choose unsavoury candidates in order to match or neutralise even more unsavoury



opponents. This use-a-crook-tocatch-a-crook argument is nothing short of a deliberate undermining of the system in which parties develop a vested interest in offering the voters less than the best.

Actually, the country is rich in men and women of commitment, character, and discipline. But the system fails to absorb them in sufficient numbers because they, too, believe that they should not soil themselves by entering the dirty world of politics.

This is defeatism. It renders a democracy ineffectual. There are

many examples of men and women of common decency who have joined politics and defeated crooked opponents without dirtying themselves by compromising principles or pandering to religious and sectional hatreds.

Today, if voters are fed up with the more-of-the-usual slogans and programmes being dished out by parties, they would do better to choose between individual candidates by closely scrutinising their records rather than just between political parties or their leaders. Rewarding individuals according to their personal records rather than blindly voting according to party labels may just be the kind of medicine that will force all parties to keep the rascals out.

# **Basket Case**

NDIA'S government-or what masquerades as one-is currently doing what it does best: passing the Gandhi cap around for money abroad. The caretakers of the country's coffers, mandarin and minister alike, have usually managed to make a good case for loans to India in international forums, and Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha's recent virtuoso performance in Japan and elsewhere with the begging bowl is in keeping with the hallowed tradition. A Japanese loan here, a temporary World Bank accommodation there, and little contribu-

tions from elsewhere—suppliers, the Asian Development Bank, et al—provide just the right backdrop against which a post-May government can spring a wish-list on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a couple of billion dollars.

There's nothing wrong in asking friends for cash. If the US can do that to prosecute a war in the Gulf, India can do so too to finance development back home. But the loans being garnered from the world's big donors currently have less to do with financing development than with keeping the country liquid internationally at a time of declining foreign exchange reserves and political uncertainty, which have reduced the scope for policy manoeuvre and delayed



corrective action. If anything, the only action seen in recent months has been of the firefighting kind, like the slamming of brakes on imports.

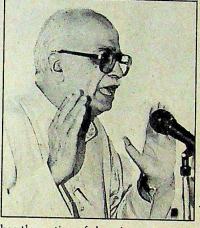
In the short-term, perhaps little else could have been expected. But the real solutions lie in addressing basic issues like export competitiveness and slashing bureaucratic red tape, which will do more to remedy the balance-of-payments crisis than efforts to hold down imports artificially. The problem: in the near future, boosting exports will be crucially dependent on imports because Indian industry needs time to catch

up on international quality standards. That means higher import bills, which can be paid for only if the country borrows more abroad or solicits more direct foreign investment. In the '80s, we preferred to borrow and piled up sky-high debts, currently adding up to Rs 100,000 crore or more. With repayments falling due and India's creditworthiness plummeting, the country is back where it was at the start of the last decade: at the IMF's door. In the '80s, the country liberalised too little, too late. The question is: will the new political masters thrown up after the elections flunk their next test of economic sanity on the external front? On past form, the answer cannot be a clear no.

# Fredom From Feat

"Freedom is indivisible. If we want to enjoy it, we must extend it to everyone, whether they are rich or poor, whether they agree with us or not, no matter what their religion or belief".

- L K Advani



ver since we earned our freedom, we have been living in fear of losing it.

Fear of separatism, fear of terrorism, fear of exploitation, fear of losing one's cultural identity... For long, we have endured a political culture that promotes discord and distrust, vengeance and violence.

Today, for the first time in independent India, a change of direction is in sight. The Bharatiya Janata Party.

has the option of choosing a completely new political culture.

A party committed to true nationalism.

The BJP shall repeal Article 370, which separates Kashmir from the rest of us and has sown the poisonous seeds of separation.

The BJP shall enact a uniform civil code and create a human rights commission to protect all citizens. And there lies the basic difference! To the BJP, the minorities are not merely vote banks, but citizens of India with equal rights — no more, and no less.

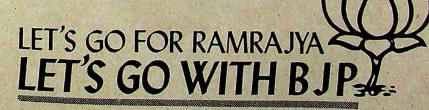
The BJP shall oppose any attack on India's national identity — be it Kashmir, Punjab, or Ayodhya.

The BJP shall oppose the proposal of pseudo secular parties to reserve jobs on the basis of religion.

You know you can trust the BJP.

Because the BJP has got what others haven't. High integrity, consistent ideology, internal discipline and stability, mature leadership, and a dedicated cadre to do them all — and do them well.

Think about it. You've tried the rest and paid the price. This time, the BJP deserves your mandate to uplift the people, upgrade the country. To keep India strong, stable and united.



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"To liberate all forms of life from fear, is my vow" To Indians, Ram is an ideal; a symbol of integrity, justice and compassion.

RAM\*
Freedom from fear



ROTI Freedom from want



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Freedom from discrimination

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# Rambling Rajiv

 WITH the Congress(I) now aiming high in the electoral sweepstakes, partymen believe that success will depend largely on star campaigner Rajiv Gandhi not



making any major goofs or irresponsible utterances. So quite naturally, some of his closest aides were wincing all of last fortnight over some of the unrehearsed lines that slid from the party president's tongue.

In several parties Rajiv has attended he has been boasting that had he been in power the Gulf war may have been avoided. How so? Pat came the answer that he would have used his personal equation with Saddam Hussain as well as India's clout within the Non-Aligned Movement to persuade Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait before the Allied invasion.

On another occasion at a dinner, the former prime minister, describing his remeinister, describing in Moscow with Gorbachev, casually referred to him several times as "Gorby". All the while his aides squirmed and shifted uncomfortably in their seats. These are just the kind of things, wailed an aide, that tend to detract from his image as a wiser and maturer

man that his mediamen are always trying very desperately to project.

# Symbolic Search

THE controversy over the BJP's election symbol has generated what the eggheads would refer to as a "lively socio-religious debate". Like a question in a term paper, the antagonists have been asking: which party was the first to wrap religion inside an election symbol? The most obvious answer—the BJP and its lotus—may not be correct if one is to believe party President Murli Manohar Joshi.

Joshi threw some new history on the subject that the Congress(I) would no doubt label "revisionist". Joshi revealed that during his recent foray into Kerala he discovered a temple where the hand is worshipped as a deity. This tem-

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN



ple, he said triumphantly, was older than the Congress(I)'s adoption of the hand as its symbol. "Isn't this misuse of religion for electoral purposes?" he asked. Researchers are now busy studying whether the hammer and sickle were objects of religious adulation in Calcutta before the Bolsheviks adopted them as the metaphor of revolution.

# Press Perks

• Minister of State for Civil Aviation Harmohan Dhawan is a master at PR, particularly when it comes to the fine art of keeping members of the Fourth Es-



tate in a mellow mood.

As an MP from Chandigarh—a seat that he'd certainly like to retain—he made sure that the waiters and maitre d's at the corbusier city's popular Mehfil restaurant (which his family owns) didn't knit their eyebrows in disapproval at journalists qualifying themselves for hefty discounts after they'd been through several rounds of tandoori chicken and dal makhani.

The stories of Dhawan's generosity to journalists spread beyond Chandigarh's shores when, as civil aviation minister, he impressed on airlines staff the importance of treating reporters foraging for tickets at the airport as VIPs.

That wasn't all. The scribes were in for yet another surprise. More recently, just before journalists could begin staring their gift horse in the mouth, Dhawan presented a dish antenna to the Chandigarh Press Club. And to top it all he even managed to get Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar to fly

down to Chandigarh to switch on the TV set beaming CNN, Peter Arnett et al.

# Tantric Tack

• Chandra Shekhar's aides have been saying that the lame duck chief executive, come hell or high water, will remain prime minister of the country at least until October. When you ask, by what stretch of the constitutional imagination this is possible, they whisper, darkly, it has been foretold.

The first guess, that Chandra Swami must be the soothsayer, is quickly poohpoohed. The fact is that, like Macbeth, Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar recently journeyed into the forest. The fire-burn-and-cauldron-bubble genius was Baba Shri Ram of Jashpur in the interior of Madhya Pradesh's Raigarh district.

Accompanied by his



younger brother and son, Chandra Shekhar participated in a two-and-a-halfhour tantrik puja at the baba's ashram. Outsiders were not allowed entry to the ashram while the prime minister was there.

Chandra Shekhar had visited the ashram shortly before becoming prime minister last year—while he was still the thane of Ballia.

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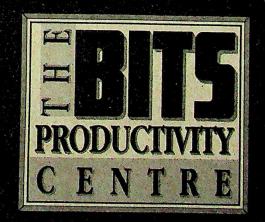
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- 1st February OR 1st May, 1st July, 1st September, 1st November, 1st January and 1st March to crosses that the first apstalment of anieness on every deposit i paid within 2 monitor from the date of the deposit.
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- b. Date of incorporation 1 25th March 1975
- c. Business carried on by the Company
- 1 To linance mainly Hire Purchase requirements of buses, formes, etc., of the Transport Undertakings situated or operating within the state of Tarial Nadu.
- d. Brief particulars of the : The Company is managed by Board of Directors consisting of management of the Directors nominated by Government of Tanal Nadu
- e. Names, addresses and occupation of the Directors

NAME	OCCUPATION	ADDRESS
Theu A.M. Sundararaj, IAS Charman	Chairman Therovaltuvar Transport Corpn. Limited	No.33 McNicholas Road II Lane. Chetpet. Madras-600-031.
Thiru R. Santhanam, IAS Director	Secretary to Govt. of Tamil Nadu Transport Department	13 8th Cross Street Shastri Nagar, Adyar Madras-600 020
Thru M.A. Gowrishankar, IAS Director	Special Secretary to Govt of Tamal Nadio, Finance Department	No.14, II Main Road Gandhi Nagar, Adyar Madras 600 020
Thiru P.S. Pandiyan, IAS Director	Chairman & Managing Director Tamil Nadu Industrial Investment Corpn, Dd.	AA43, III Main Road, Anna Nagar, Madras-600 040.
Thiru K. Subramanian, BE Director	Managing Director Thiruvalluvar Transport Corpn, Limited	P.No.2717, 7th Street, Y. Block, 12th Main Road Anna Nagar West, Madras-600 040.
They R. Rathinasabapathy BE, MBA, FIE. Director	Director Institute of Road Transport	T.S.No. 42/2, Kalaimagal Nagar (W), Ekkattuthangal Madras-600 097
Thiru M. Jeyaraj, BE. M.Sc., (Engg) FIE.	Director Motor Vehicles Maintanance Organisation	Al. 105, 3rd Street 11th Main Road Anna Naşar, Madras-600 040:
Dr. R. Ganesan, Ph D. Director	Managing Director Pallavan Transport Consultancy Services Ltd.	Plot No. 269, 17th East Street, Kamaraj Nagar Thurvannuyur Madras-600 041.
Think R.K. Sharma, IAS Managing Director	Joint Secretary to Government of	No. 8, Krishna Apartments 2A, Warren Road.

- Profits of the Company before and after making provisions for tax, for the three financial years immediately preceeding the date of advertisement.

17933.82 15960.18

		Profit Before tax	Profit after lax
1987-88	With the second	11.20	5.32
1988-89		10.98	5.21
1989-90	. 0	17.95	10.75
	and but the Company	n toront of the cald town.	NI

- 8. Dividends declared by the Company in respect of the said years
- Summarised financial position of the Company as appearing in the latest audited Balance Sheet:
- (Rs. in lakhs) As at 31st March 1990 198 As at 31st March . 1990 1989 ASSETS 1989 LIABILITIES Share Capital Share Deposit 9.74 5.00 4.10 5.01 Reserves and Surplus Secured Loans Unsecured Loans Current Liabilities and Provisions 1142 06 1025.78 16777.02 14925.29
- Total The Company can rase deposts under Reserve Bank of India directions upto a maximum of Rs. 67.84 crores based on capital structure on 31.5.90. The aggregate of the depost-held on the last day of the year immediately proceeding the financial year for the above purpose is Rs. 49.16 crores.

1882.39 17933.82 15960 18

There are no overdue deposit other than the unclaimed deposits

1790.91

- that the Company has complied with the provision of the Directions of the Reserve Bank of India applicable to it.
- ii. that the compliance with the Directions does not imply that the repayment of deposits is guaranteed by the Reserve Bank of India. and
- iii that the deposits accepted/renewed by the Company are unsecured and rank pan pasu with other unsecured liabilities.
- The advertisement is issued on the autority and in the name of the Board of Directors of the Company, the text of which was approved by the Board on 27.9.90 and a copy of it has been filled with the Regional Office of the Department of Financial Companies, Reserve Bank of India, Bangalore.

(On behalf of and as authorised by the Board of Directors)
For Tamil Nadu Transport Development Finance Corpn. Ltd.
R.K. Sharma Managing Director

TAMIL NADU TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CORPORATION LIMITED (TDFC) is a fully owned Government Company.

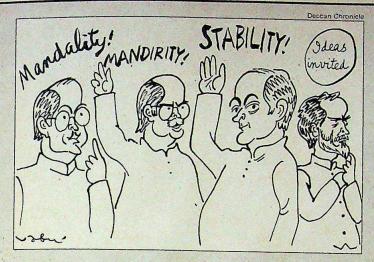
Transport Department

io. 8, Krehna Apartments A, Warren Road, Mylapore Madray-600-004.

- This company is managed by the Board of Directors nominated by the Government, mostly senior I.A.S. Officers.
- The total deposits have crossed Rs. 174 crores.
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- It will be a terrorist assembly if elections are held in the state under present conditions. 

  RAJIV GANDHI, on elections in Punjab, in The Daily
- It is going to be a hung Parliament and we will again be trying for alliances and cooperation. Why not try for them now and avoid elections?
  - SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY in The Deccan Chronicle
- A masjid is a masjid forever. It cannot be transformed into anything else.
   G.M. BANATWALA, IUML general secretary, in Free Press Journal
- If a Muslim says 'I am proud of Islam', they say very good. But when a Hindu says so, they call it fundamentalism.
- I like him more than Indira Gandhi. He has some very precious human qualities.
   SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR RAY, on Rajiv Gandhi, in The Telegraph
- The 800 million people are not there to make prime ministers out of people with beautiful faces. CHANDRA SHEKHAR in Sunday
- The Imam cannot protect you. But Lord Ram can.
  - ASHOK SINGHAL, appealing to Muslims at the vHP rally, in Organiser
- As a political leader, we neither respect him nor follow his advice.
  - SULTAN SALAHUDDIN OWAISI, former MP, on the Imam of Jama Masjid, in The Deccan Chronicle
- One cannot be a successful politician and remain fully honest.
  - J.R.D. TATA, on V.P. Singh, in The Times of India
- My relationship has been, and will always remain personal.
  - AMITABH BACHCHAN, on Rajiv Gandhi, in The Sunday Observer
- A circus without animals? It will be like a movie without a heroine.
- WILLIAM GEORGE, manager of National Circus, on the ban on performing animals, in The Statesman
- It is a public disgrace of the 20th century that, year after year, the Nobel Prize Committee for Literature overlooked Graham Greene...for petty political or personal reasons.
- As for my sexual prowess, I use the Saddam Hussain policy—once you enter you should never withdraw.
  - CHUNKEY PANDEY in Star & Style

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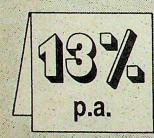
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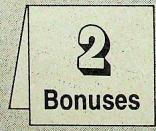
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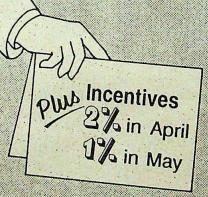
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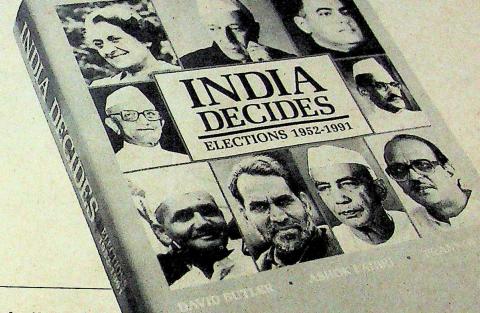
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Freedom from discrimination

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# CHEEKY CHASE

For once, life was imitating art. To onlookers it may have seemed like another chase sequence from the annals of Tamil cinema.

On Madras' Marina beach recently, an ambassador car hurtled down the road with two women occupants. In close pursuit was



another car with a man at the wheel. The chase continued in this fashion till the man finally overtook the other car, edged it to the kerb, and unceremoniously grabbed one of the women. then quickly sped off.

An alert policeman in the vicinity swung into action fearing a case of kidnapping. A massive search operation was then launched. And soon the police managed to apprehend the fleeing man along with his helpless victim.

But, the incident was nothing more than a lovers' tiff. For, the victim was none other than the kidnapper's wife, who had decided to take a small break following a domestic squabble.

ailing man being duly at-

# **CLEAN SWIPE**

Conmen, godmen, the streets are chock-a-block Recently with them. though, the scenario shifted to a Bombay nursing home.

It all began early one morning when a young man was leaving the clinic after having kept vigil by his sick grandfather's bedside all through the night.

Enter an elderly gentleman solicitously enquiring about the patient, and promising to look after the sick man for the day. The young man was naturally relieved that even in today's busy workaday world there were still good samaritans to be found.

The day passed with the.



tended upon by the old man and in more ways than one. By the end of it the old man had sponged the patient clean literally—he had wiped him off his wrist watch and the steel utensils kept at his bedside. Obviously modern-day good samaritans believe in taking their dua

# SELF SUSPENSION

Few have come out unscathed from the hallowed portals of India's babudom where rules reign while mortals perish. Often the unsuspecting layman is the victim but recently the inspector general of police in Bangalore was trapped in this quagmire.



This curious situation arose when the top police officerdiscovered to his horror that his salary had been withheld for the month of March. He soon realised that due to an administrative hitch, his post had not been encadred by the Union Government. The accountant-general decided that he was ineligible for a

salary and issued strict instructions to this effect.

The panic-stricken policeman appealed to higher authorities at the headquarters but to no avail. Finally in sheer disgust, he proposed his own suspension. In suspension, he claimed, he would at least have the solace of a subsistence allowance.

# DOING A HOUDINI

Set a thief to catch a thief, so goes the saying and the Bombay Police are contemplating doing just this, after one escaped from custody right under their nose last fortnight.

The thief, having entered a flat, was gathering

his loot when he was discovered by a resident who sounded the alarm. His escape route led to the lift and as he leapt through the closing doors, he was followed by an enterprising family member. A scuffle ensued. the thief was overpowered and arrested.

While the family was



busy filing an FIR, the thief was made to sit handcuffed to a bench. The formalities completed. the family turned to leave only to realise that the thief was a step ahead and had already left. He had done a Houdini and wriggled out of his handcuffs even before the ink on the FIR had dried.

# MAKESHIFT MANDIR

Conning people in the name of religion has become an art form in our country and a shining example of this was seen in New Delhi's crowded Janpath recently.

The peepal trees that line the street have a natu-



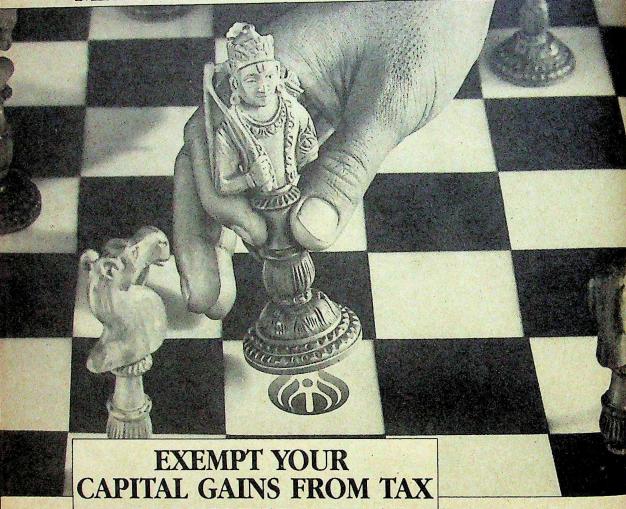
ral knot-formation on their bark, but one particular tree apparently had a formation with a slight difference. According to a parking lot attendant, this tree had sprouted knots that looked like Lord Hanuman, Needless to say, many people thronged at the site in order to get darshan, while an

enterprising young man promptly painted the knots vermilion and set up a makeshift mandir to collect money and offer prasad.

Even as the instant pujaris were raking it in came the police to scatter the growing crowd after convincing them they were barking up the wrong tree.



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ALIGARH: M/s. Jai Deepak Bartan Bhandar, Mahavir Ganj, . M/s. Lila Dhar Babu Lal, Mahavir Ganj, Chowk Bazar, • M/s. Deepak Bartan Bhandar, Subhash Bazar, Railway Road, BEHRAICH: M/s. Shyam Lal & Sons, Chowk Bazar, BANDA: M/s. Bengal Crockery House, Goosin Ganj,
BALLIA: M/s. Vijay Gun House, Station Road,
BASTI; M/s. Sushil Kumar Bartam Merchant, Mangle
Bazar, DEORIA: M/s. Om Stores, Near Kotwali,
Moti Lai Road, DEHRADUN: M/s. Satya Parkash & Co. 70/5, Paltan Bazar, . M/s. Kapital Stores, 99, Paltan Bazar, • M/s. Data Ram Vinod Kumar, Dhanwala,

FARRUKHABAD: M/s. Raj Glass & Crockery
Stores, Nehru Road, • M/s. Salig Ram Bhola Nath Bartan
Store, Chowk Bazar, 
GORAKHPUR: M/s. Amar Crockery Centre, Maya Bazar, Kotwali Road, . M/s. Ganeshi Lai Ram Niwas Agencies, Gole Ghar, . M/s. Modern Crockery Museum, 18, Water Works Building. Gole Ghar, . M/s. Fancy Bartan Stores, Reti Chowk, .

M/s. Vijay Agencies, 16, 17; Town Hall Market . M/s. Ganeshi Lal & Sons, Cinema Road, • M/s. Shri Ganesh Enterprises, 16, Water Works Building, □ HARDOI: M/s. Shyam Lal & Sons, Railway Ganj, • M/s. Kashi Ram Banwari Lal, Railway Ganj, □ HALDWANI: M/s. Sardar Crockery House, Nanital Road, □ HAPUR: M/s. Crockery Centre, Railway Road, U JHANSI: M/s. Kashi Parsad Mithley Saran, Sarraía Bazar, 

M/s. Bombay Steel

Emporium, 175 Jawahar Chowk, 

JAUNPUR: M/s.

Glass Stores, Har Lalka Road, 

KANPUR: M/s. Asia

Light House, Meston Road, 

M/s. S.M. Rasheed & Sons, 43/205, Meston Road, • M/s. Gopi Lai Gupta & Co. 46/63, Hatya, ♥ M/s. Laxmi Bartan Stores, 108/130, Sisamau Bazar, ● M/s. M/s. Nafis Crockery House, Mool\* Ganj, • M/s. Kumar Fancy Stores, 114, Navin Market, • M/s. Mohd. Hanif Mohd. Anis, Meston Road, • M/s. Krishna Kumar Umesh Chandra, 68/10 Bhoosa Toli, • M/s. Raslogi Steel Centre, 67/5 Hula Ganj, □
LUCKNOW: M/s. Kanhaya Lal Parag Das, Pili Kothi,
Yahya Ganj, • M/s. Inder Chand Jain & Sons, Aminabad,
• M/s. Ram Saran & Co., Aminabad, • M/s. Sansar Agencies, Mumtaj Market, • M/s. Chaman Lai Aggarwal & Sons, Nazirabad, 🗆 LAKHIMPUR KHERI: M/s. Amber Lal Radhey Shyam, Champa Bhawan, Main Bazar,

MEERUT: M/s. Shakun Bartan Bhandar, Begum Bridge, . M/s. Data Ram Gupta & Sons, Valley Bazar, M/s. Krishna Crockery & Departmental Store, Sadar Bazar, © M/s. Sona Electric Agency, 184, Sadar Bazar,

NAJIBABAD: M/s. Shyam Lal & Sons, Chowk,

MUZAFFAR NAGAR: M/s. Mittal Enterprises,

101 Bhagat Singh Road, ARAMPUR: M/s. Aggarwal Crockery House, Meston Ganj, • M/s. Selection Emporium, 22, Safdar Ganj, □ RAI-BAREILLY: M/s. Gupta Traders, Kapar Ganj, • M/s. Radhey Shyam Ghan Shyam Dass Gupta, Malkhana, • M/s. Radhey Shyam Ghan Shyam Dass Gupta, Malkhana, • M/s. Raj Bandhu Milan Cincma Road, □ RUPAIDIHA: M/s. Ramdool Store, P.O. Rupaidiha, • M/s. Shri Ram Stores, P.O. Rupaidiha, □ SAHARANPUR: M/s. Nihal Chand Harbans Lal, 15 Nehru Market, • M/s. Jaswant Rai

Narender Kumar, Laxmi Market,

SHAHJAHANPUR: M/s. Sehgal Gift Centre,
Govind Ganj, • M/s. Sehgal Crockeries, Sadar Bazar,

SHAMLI: M/s. Shugan Chand Sohan Lal, Baza
Bazar, SULTANPUR: M/s. Kamali Chalini House,
Shab Gan; & M/s. Shah Ganj, • M/s. Dashrath Lal & Sons, Chowk Thateri,

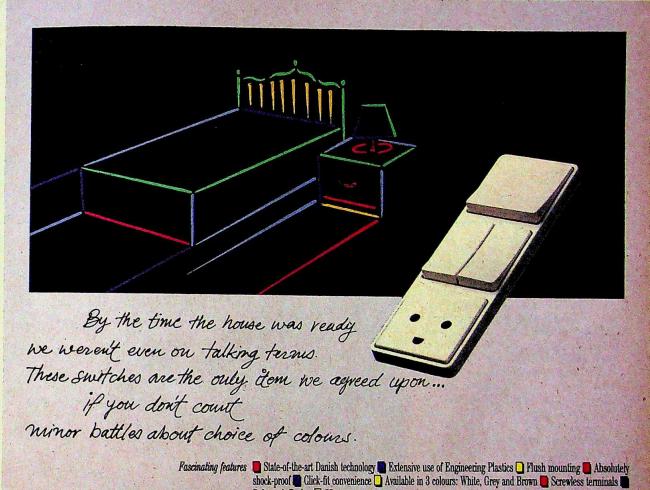
VARANASI: M/s. Bharat Glass Stores, Dal Mandi.

M/s. Ideal Glass House, Dal Mandi. • M/s. Mittal Traders, D-11/8, Kotwal Pura, Bans Phatak, . M/s-Girdhar Dass & Sons, Bans Phatak, • M/s. Mohan Lal Krishan Chand; D-10/15 Vishwanath Lane, • M/s. Stainless Steel Centre, Bans Phatak • M/s. Glass & Plywood Centre, CK/39/9, Dai Mandi, 
MORADABAD: M/s. Navin Glass Agency, Katra
Puran Jat, Ganj Bazar, 
GONDA: M/s. Paras Steel Emporium, Utrauli Road,

CALCUTTA

CALCUTTA: M/s. Krishna Trading Co., P-11.

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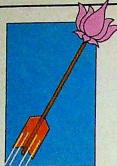
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BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

# Metet

By unprecedented cadre mobilisation, playing the Ayodhya card, and enticing voters to gamble on an untried party, the BJP hopes to dramatically improve its Lok Sabha strength.

By SHAHNAZ ANKLESARIA AIYAR

THE slogans are shrill, loud and clear. The strategy is purposeful and single-minded. The campaign is on four-wheel drive. And in Lal Krishan Advani, the party, for the first time, has a national-level prime ministerial candidate. This is not the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of 1989, plagued with self-doubt, looking for alliances, and hoping at the most for a respectable showing to erase the shame of 1985 when it managed two lousy seats in Parliament. It smells blood.

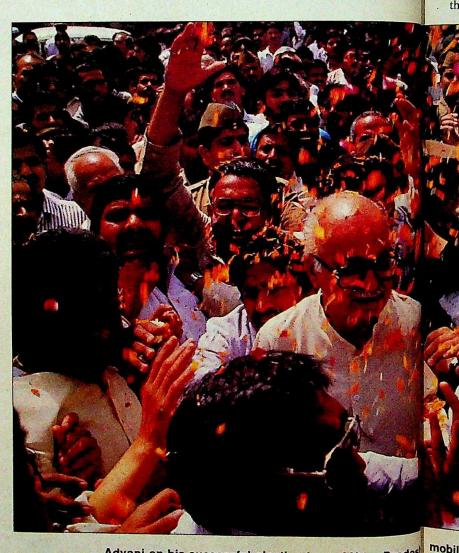
In what is perhaps the most ambitious grassroots cadre-based mobilisation that any political party has ever undertaken, almost the entire discinetwork of RSS-affiliated organisations throughout the country is moving into the electoral fray with the well-oiled cohesiveness of a conquering army. Some two lakh carefully-selected RSS workers have already spread out in the field canvassing support for the Hindu cause with a fervour that was evident only once earlier when they helped generate the anti-Indira Gandhi wavethatswepther out of office in 1977.

The organisational edge gives the BJP two advantages. First, that in a second general election being held within 16 months—and that too, for the first time in the scorching summer heat—a ballot-fatigued public would not turn out to vote in large numbers. A low turnout, BJP strategists believe, can only be exploited by committed cadres who know how to get the vote out. Second, the party rightfully boasts that whereas

the Janata Dal and the Congress(I) depend exclusively on the personal campaigning of V.P. Singh and Rajiv Gandhi, the BJP is the only party that does not revolve around one personality.

To drive home this point, 15 prominent members of the BJP—"our front galaxy", as one national executive member describes them—have begun covering every nook and corner of the country with the party's message of "Ram, roti aur insaaf'. In just two weeks starting March 24, these leaders held nearly 4,000 public meetings in 11 states.

Even though some party general secretaries are boasting that they will hoist the saffron flag in Delhi this June, in private



Advani on his successful election tour of Uttar Prades

they are more circumspect about their goals. The bottom line. they say, is to dramatically improve their 1989 performance and firmly establish the BJP as a credible national alternative to the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal. At the state level the party is making the ambitious boast that it will ride the Hindu wave and establish Uttar Pradesh as its new fortress.

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But the best-laid formulae of politicians do not necessarily create electoral magic. Party elders are aware that the passion generated by their main plank-Ayodhya-and the euphoria of last October have subsided. So the problem the BJP faces is keeping the issue alive. Ideologically, it has tried to do this by a small variation on the theme—that Ayodhya is not a religious issue but symbolic of a political one: the right of Hindus to assert their values with pride in their own country.

At the ground level, the party tried to keep the issue alive by supporting the VIIP's continuous drive to bring batches of kar sewaks to stage satyagrahas in Ayodhya. And once elections were announced, Ayodhya was revived through the three yatras organised by the party leadership from Kanyakumari, Jammu and Gujarat, which culminated in the massive Boat Club rally in Delhi on April 4.

While the party is committed to translating such enthusiasm into votes, it is also fighting a rearguard battle to contain the apprehensions such messages have aroused even among

he made one of his most thought-provoking speeches on the need to redefine secularism and free the minorities from the manipulative grip of parties. He even stopped the crowd from shouting "shame, shame" when he mentioned V.P. Singh declaring a holiday on Prophet Mohammed's birthday—emphasising that nothing was wrong with a religious holiday, but that Singh had reduced it to a gimmick.

This campaign is aimed at enticing voters who have given other parties a chance, to take a gamble on a fresh one. Because of its disciplined approach, the party has an image of cohesiveness vastly different from the collection of tickethungry squabblers that appear to fill the ranks of the other political parties in the fray. And it wants to capitalise on this.

The party is also banking on the labours of its cadres not just for this election's organisational chores but also to produce votes based on their 10 years of arduous social work among the Harijans and tribals of Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, and Orissa. The activities, consisting of campaigns against untouchability, literacy drives, an improvement in sanitation, they expect, will yield a rich harvest of support.



# Ram plus organisation equals optimism

GUJARAT: Leaders predict an improvement on 1989 victory in 12 seats contested in a tie-up with Janata Dal.

Successful inroads into Congress(I) vote bank of Adivasis, Harijans and OBCs, more so after Ayodhya crisis. V.P. Singh's key constituency, the middle class, veering around to BJP. Suresh Mehta, party boss, says the slogan, 'now give us a chance', is catching on. Also, BJP is miles ahead of its main rival—Congress(I)-Chimanbhai alliance, in campaigning.

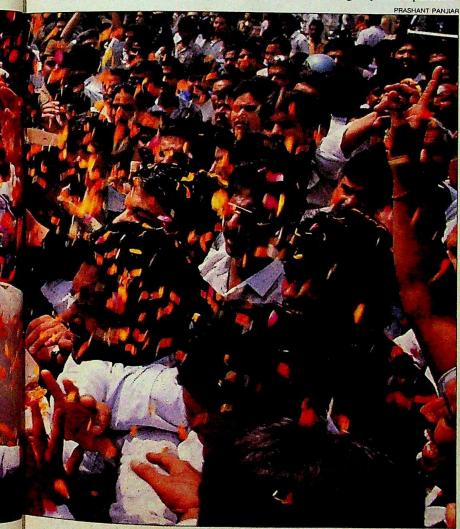
UTTAR PRADESH: Strongest testament to party's growing power comes from Congress(I) and Janata Dalleaders who believe main enemy will be BJP in most constituencies.

N.D. Tiwari: "We will be contesting against the Janata Dal only for a couple of seats around Etawah and Ballia. The rest will be against the BJP." Janata Dal's Ajit Singh: "It is going to be a BJP affair, with Congress(I) at number three."

For first time, party contesting more than 80 seats. Best record in 1967—won 12 of the 77 seats contested. Ram Janmabhoomi hysteria at lower pitch, but fall-out—communal violence in 41 of 63 districts over a five-month period—attracting Hindus across caste lines to the saffron banner.

Mulayam Singh Yadav's handling of Ayodhya kar sewa—1.85 lakh arrests all over state—resulting in ready-made manpower for BJP in every constituency including Amethi and Fatehpur, where party had no presence. Party also expected to fare better in rural areas.

BIHAR: Dominated traditionally by socialists and commu-



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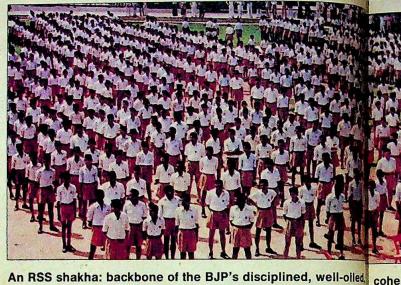
large sections of Hindus who abhor the political exploitation of Ram. The result is a parallel effort at refining its pitch with promises to counter the advocates of social justice and stability—V.P. Singh and Rajiv Gandhi.

For example, in former party president L.K. Advani's most recent electoral foray—his first in Punjab—the appeal was to Hindu audiences but the message was surprisingly moderate. In Jalandhar and Ludhiana, Advani addressed crowds ranging from 2,000 to 10,000 at the local grounds guarded by armed security men. Time and again he cautioned his followers against raising Hindutva slogans. And in the process

nists. Now witnessing a political paradox-a discernible addiction to what Marxists denounce as opiate of the masses: religion. And with saffron hue. Party General Secretary Yashodanandan Singh: "We have clicked in the public mind."

Six-month-old Mandal wave synonymous with Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav being buffeted by a strong saffron counter-current recently manifested in a massive contingent from state at VHPsponsored rally in New Delhi.

BJP's traditional vote base-tribal regions of south Bihar-expected to expand as party contests all seats, buoyed by finding that Advani's Rath Yatra and his arrest in the state created an indelible imprint on the minds of even rural voters who mobbed Advani during his recent tour. Congress(I) leaders admitting privately that Ram could wind up stealing a march over Mandal, BIP way ahead of its rivals-Janata Dal and Congress(I)-in its electioneering with elected units in districts and blocks, and booth-level committees.



An RSS shakha: backbone of the BJP's disciplined, well-oiled

# BETTER THAN BEFORE

# Small gains can usher larger benefits

PUNJAB: Party fared badly in Punjab because of its narrow base—the urban non-Sikh vote was split between it and Congress(I). Now, party is looking to expand constituency by contesting eight of 13 seats and is hoping to woo urban

Congress(I) voters to its side.

HARYANA: Making an ambitious bid by contesting all 10 seats independently. In 1989, BJP forfeited Ambala and Karnal due to its pact with Devi Lal. A year later party won a byelection to Vidhan Sabha from Ambala against a Chautala

candidate. Barring candidates Chart by B.K. SHARMA like veteran Surai Bhan from Ambala, other Lok Sabha can-TOTAL

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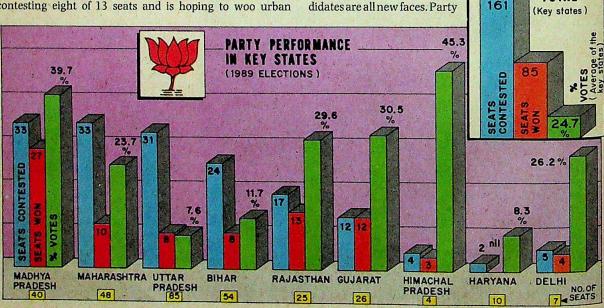
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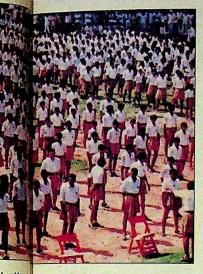
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# THE REQUIRED SWING

The BJP secured 11.4 per cent of the total votes polled during 1989 and won 86 of the 225 seats it contested. But this is a misleading indicator of the party's electoral potential. Its average was much higher than the national average in Delhi and in the crucial states like Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and lower in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Besides it contested only 161 of the total of 299 seats in the crucial states. But this time the party is contesting more than 425 seats. It expects that a triangular fight in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh will help improve its tally in the Hindi belt and a massive swing in the south will fetch it a few additional seats, while retaining the traditional strongholds.

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aims to do well in "G.T. road belt" of Ambala, Karnal, Kurukshetra, where no single caste dominates voting patterns.

KARNATAKA: Contested five seats in the previous elections. Failed to win even one. Yet, this time is brimming with confidence. Party morale is boosted by infighting in Congress(I), poor image of Bangarappa Government and failure of Janata Dal, Janata Dal(S) and other parties to form an any sort of alliance.

WEST BENGAL: Party confident of improving poll performance. Contesting 32 parliamentary seats and 240 of 294 assembly seats, not in

order to stake a claim to power, but to strike roots with an eye on the future. Ever since party established itself in state in 1987, it has slowly been gaining acceptability. In '87 Assembly polls, party polled even less than 1 per cent votes. But in '89 Lok Sabha polls, its share was 1.77 per cent. And in '90 municipal elections it polled as much as 7 per cent of popular votes. Says General Secretary Paras Dutta: "We are no push-overs any

ORISSA: Party is all set to step out of fringes of state's political canvas (it forfeited its deposits in all six seats it contested in 1989). Hopes to make substantial gain in tribal districts like Phulbani and Kalahandi, where Christian missionaries have been active. Ram is being marketed by party as an effective foil to Christ. Around 14 Ram jyoti raths went round in state last year alone, making a strong impact on local Hindu mind.

ANDHRA PRADESH: Party expects to gain from negative vote against Congress(I) whose performance has been lackadaisical since its return to power in December 1989, and the continuing antipathy of voters to Telugu Desam. Says state unit President M. Venkaiah Naidu: "We appear as a credible and practical alternative and so our simple appeal to the voters is to give us a chance.'.

MAHARASHTRA: In 1989, rightist Hindu alliance established its credentials as the main opposition group in Congress(I) bastion of Maharashtra by winning 14 of state's 48 Lok Sabha seats. In 1991, even Chief Minister Sharad Pawar acknowledges main challenge to ruling party comes from BJP-Shiv Sena alliance. This time the two Hindu parties dream of becoming dominant parliamentary group from Maharashtra and ensuring a BJP government at Centre. Asserts state General Secretary Dharamchand Choradia confidently: "Our performance will definitely be better. Both the alliance partners will double their seats.'

In last Lok Sabha poll, newly-formed BJP-Sena alliance made a sensational debut, bagging more than 28 per cent votes. Sena won four seats, BJP 10, while alliance ended runner-up in many of the constituencies. Except for Congress(I)-dominated sugar belt of western Maharashtra, alliance has spread its roots further in Bombay and all other regions—Vidarbha, Marathwada, Konkan and Khandesh. Contests in state will again be three-cornered, and BJP expects a further division of Congress(I) vote bank thanks to popularity of V.P. Singh among Muslim and Dalit voters. Alliance is

CANDIDATES

# **Strategic Picks**



EVERY fourth BJP candidate in Madhya Pradesh is a lawyer. Uttar Pradesh has three retired DIGs in the fray-Sirish Chandra Dixit, Bhartendu Prakash Singhal and Shyam Lal. Much touted is former comptroller and auditor general T.N. Chaturvedi, who is the party's candidate from Brahmin-domi-

nated Kanauj. And there are half-a-dozen saffron-clad sadhus who aimed for tickets and succeeded. This, then, is the BJP's motley crowd for the tenth general election, and the list heralds a significant departure from the party's norm.

Further, Congress(I) defectors are making the job easier for the врг. Sheila Gautam, daughter of the wellknown Congress leader, Mohan Lal Gautam, is contesting from a BJP-hating Aligarh.

The party has also nominated a large number of OBCs in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. A Harijan candidate, Bimbadhar Kunwar, has been fielded from Sambalpur in Orissa, which is not a reserved constituency. Admits Kalraj Mishra, Uttar

The party's list includes a large number of lawyers, retired army and police officers and some sadhus, VHP activists, Harijans, maharajas and even half-adozen Muslims.

Pradesh BJP general secretary: "We have given tickets to a fair number of OBCs to counter V.P. Singh and Mulayam's policy of dividing society."

Apart from stalwart Vijaye Raje Scindia, some erstwhile royal scions have been nominated in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh. Says BJP Vice-President S.S. Bhandari, on why the party has spread the net so wide: "They have been selected because they have a better winning chance." Haunted by a paucity of popular foot soldiers, the party has also selected cricketer Chetan Chauhan, and actors Victor Banerjee and Arvind Trivedi.

Mahant Avaidyanath, who won from Gorakhpurin Uttar Pradesh on the Hindu Mahasabha ticket in 1989. is now on the BJP side. And Prakash Narain Trivedi, who was in charge of kar sewaks from the south, has been rewarded with Banda in Uttar Pradesh.

While the average age of the party nominees this time is below 45, and five women have been included in Madhya Pradesh, the party is also fielding about half-adozen Muslims from various states, to prove its secular coinage.

-BHASKAR ROY

expected to make Ram Janmabhoomi issue cornerstone of electoral platform.

#### **WORSE THAN BEFORE**

#### Familiarity can breed reversals

MADHYA PRADESH: Lukewarm reception given to party's most charismatic orator Atal Behari Vajpayee at recent rally in Mhow and double dose of same to party President Murli Manohar Joshi, when he passed through state during his Jan Jagran Abhiyan, shows party is

facing trouble in its stronghold.

Problem party's dismal performance in state as well as unprecedented factionalism sapping its strength. At Pachore, for example, a section of BJP workers boycotted Joshi's rally and at Mhow town unit was disbanded last time because it had organised a parallel function to welcome the visiting leader.

Division of non-Congress(I) votes will harm party most. Last time it benefited because of its alliance with Janata Dal. Statistically only a 6 per cent swing towards Congress(I) could alter election scene drastically. BJP acknowledges Congress(I) as its main rival. Party's new slogan, 'Try us', may not work, Voters have already tried it, and many found it wanting.

RAJASTHAN: Chief Minister Bhairon Singh

Shekhawatis Party's only star campaigner in state. No other state leader can touch his popularity. Elections will, more than anything else, be a test of his political dexterity.

But Shekhawat is shaky. Understands too well the importance of opposition unity, because of which Congress(I) got no seat in Rajasthan last time despite polling 37 per cent votes. Opposition disunity is BJP's biggest disadvantage. Other disadvantages: factional fights between Shekhawat group and what is vaguely known as 'RSS group'-led by cabinet colleague Lalit Kishore Chaturvedi-weak organisational base and disgruntled workers.

Other factors which will work against BJP are alienation of Jats, who voted for party last time, and Congress(I)'s efforts to recapture vote banks among Harijans and Muslims. Muslims realise voting for Janata Dal-as in 1989would indirectly help BJP.

#### **TOUGH GOING**

#### Uphill battles pose the challenge

HIMACHAL PRADESH: Election rallies of Chief Minister Shanta Kumar indicate he is defensive-trying to explain away his government's failure on several fronts, particularly apple policy which has powerful apple lobby up in arms. To placate this lobby, state Cabinet announced significant and major concessions such as increased subsidies. But Congress(I) and Janata Dal propaganda that ruling party is anti-farmer is rapidly gaining credence with

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

public. One of three BJP-ruled states, where recently, image of party has taken a severe beating, and popularity has dipped considerably.

ASSAM: Historically, party never could make a deep impact here and percentage of votes polled for one or two seats it contested steadily declined. Notwithstanding unimpressive earlier performance, this time it is contesting half of the total 14 seats and is banking on support Hindi-speaking from community which has come closer because of ULFA-generated terror. Maximum effort is now focussed on making its presence felt where there was none before.

KERALA: In last Lok Sabha elections, BJP contested all 20 seats but did not win even a single one. Yet secured over 6.72 lakh votes-4.51 per cent of total votes polled. Ideologi-

RJP **ELECTORAL PROSPECTS** TOUGH FIGHT NO. OF SEATS CERTAIN WINNABLE CHANCE WON IN 1989 42 NIL 10 31 Andhro Pradesh NIL 54 10 10 11 23 Bihar 8 7 13 2 26 12 4 Gujarat 10 NIL NIL 2 Harvana 1 Himachal Pradesh 4 3 NIL 2 1 1 12 Karnataka 28 NIL 10 5 NIL 20 NIL NIL NIL 20 Kerala 40 27 2 5 Madhya Pradesh 21 12 Maharashtra 10 9 48 16 7 16 Orissa 21 NIL NIL 19 1 1 Raiasthan 25 13 1 3 9 12 Tomil Nodu 39 NIL NIL NIL NIL 39 Uttor Prodesh 85 8 11 21 43 10 West Bengal 42 NIL NIL NIL NIL 42 Excluding other states 484 81 38 123 246 SEATS SEATS alliance

This chart has been prepared on the basis of assessments made by INDIA TODAY'S state correspondents. It is not based on any scientific survey but reflects the mood and trends existing in the second week of April, before the various parties announced their list of candidates for the Lok Sabha poll

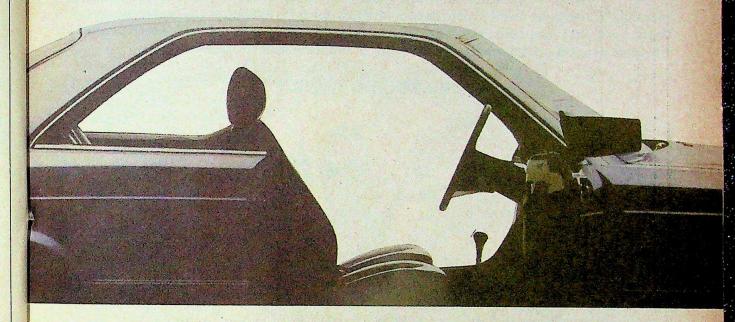
Chart by B.K. SHARMA

cally, BJP sees Marxists as an enemy ultimately to be destroyed, and for this long-term goal its immediate concern is not winning but increasing its presence and clout through electoral process by increasing percentage of votes.

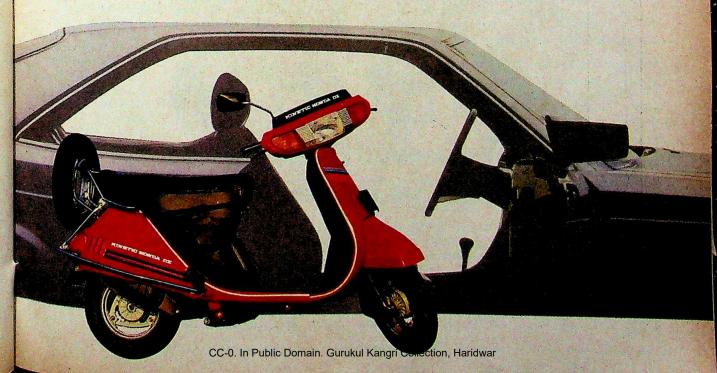
TAMIL NADU: Ambitious plans: contesting 11 Lok Sabha seats out of 39, hoping to win some. Tamil Nadu can be branded a 'no chance state', but lot depends on candidates and their opponents in key districts where party has considerable clout. Till 1989 BJP was not an acknowledged political force here. Today, party's primary membership is up from 1.25 lakh to 5 lakh. Relatively stronger in districts of Coimbatore, Nilgiris, Kanyakumari and Madurai.

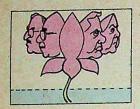
Reported by M. RAHMAN, AMARNATH K. MENON, FARZAND AHMED, N.K. SINGH, DILIP AWASTHI, KANWAR SANDHU, RAMESH MENON, ANAND VISWANATHAN, RUBEN BANERJEE and UDAY MAHURKAR

# TODAY, IS A CAR REALLY CONVENIENT FOR COMMUTING?



# OR IS THERE A MORE SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE AVAILABLE TO YOU?





#### THE ORGANISATION

# The Line of Command

The BJP adheres strictly to a highly disciplined and institutionalised structure in which rules are rules, and the chain of command is

sacrosanct. There are no backroom boys or loyalists doing the bidding of any particular leader. Decisions are taken by consensus after open debate within various forums which then becomes the party line. No individual can then impose an arbitrary diktat on others.

#### THE RULING TROIKA

VER the last decade Atal Behari Vajpayee, 61, Krishan Advani, 63, and Rajmata Vijaya Raje Scindia, 65, have emerged as the party's all-powerful trinity. Each has over 30 years of association with either the party or the RSS.

English-speaking, westernised, Advani is being projected as a mass

leader for the first time. He is the most forceful proponent of the party ideology. A consummate organisation man. Level-headed. Approach to issues consistent. Vajpayee presents the liberal face, the voice of change and com-



promise. Oratorical genius. Gregarious. Fond of good food. Rajmata Viiava Raie Scindia symbolises the shakti of Hindu womanhood. Durga and Rani Jhansi rolled in one. Uncompromising Hindutva advocate capable of touching emotional heartstrings.

The three maintain contact everyday to decide

on ideas and issues which then constitute the party line and filter down. Scindia balances things when Advani and Vajpayee differ too vigorously. But if Advani is adamant on any point he uses his clout with the RSS to his advantage.

style. Disciplinarian and conscience-keeper, he is known

to upbraid even senior leaders for lapses. Bhandari, as

one of the oldest pracharaks, is the most powerful person

after the troika. Maintains dossiers on partymen and is

the decisive voice on selection of office-bearers and candi-

dates. Govindacharya, the Tamil Brahmin who speaks

#### THE CRITICAL QUARTET

HE coordinating committee consists of party chief Dr Murli Manohar Joshi, 57, Kushabhau Thakre, 69, Sunder Singh Bhandari, 70, and Govindacharya, 44. Barring Joshi, the rest are still RSS pracharaks (full time, unmarried leaders) on deputation to the party. They provide the link between the troika and the grassroots cadres.

Joshi, a professor of physics from Allahabad University,

is a Jan Sangh traditionalist. Garhwal Brahmin. Team player. Speciality: administration. Thakre, Maharashtrian Brahmin, is known as BJP's 'fakir' because of his monastic life-









Hindi with a Bihari accent, is the Boy Wonder. Called the 'mobile computer' because of his mathematical knowledge of conand stituencies candidates, he also enjoys a rapport with members of other parties and bureaucrats.

#### THE SUPER SIX

HIS sub-group is a nuts-and-bolts operation whose members work according to well-defined portfolios. Vice-President Kishen Lal Sharma, 67, is the party's urban Punjabi refugee face. This safari-suited RSS pracharak is freely available to the press to speak for the party. K.R. Malkani, 70, edits the party paper, Organiser, and keeps the ideological juices bubbling. Party General Secretary O. Rajgopal, 61, from Kerala, a flery former Rss leader, is the backbone of the organisation in south India. Ved Prakash Goel, 64, a small-scale industrialist from Bombay, is the moneybag-Bjp's Sitaram Kesari. Dev Dass Apte, deputed from the RSS, is the Maharashtrian infrastructure man charged with logistical coordination like the distribution of publicity material. And former chief executive councillor of Delhi, Kedar Nath Sahni, 60, is also a link with industrialists and the traditional urban trading community vote bank.

# HERE IS A COMFORTABLE AND CONVENIENT 'SWITCH-OVER'



The car was your status symbol!

Your pride and joy —

once upon a time!

Chronic and obstinate traffic jams, lack of availability

of parking space, unexpected rise in fuel costs
and the high cost of maintenance, have created

mixed feelings.

The joy has diminished!
Your search for a suitable,
convenient alternative,
that surmounts all the hassles of city driving
and yet upholds your social image, has begun.
It leads you to KINETIC HONDA.
And you say YES.
A 'switch-over' that will make you

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proud and happy ...... once again!

THE FUTURE BELONGS TO US

#### THE TRENCH WARRIORS

HEPublicity and Campaign Committee is headed by K.R. Malkani, but the guiding light is Arun Jaitley, 39, additional solicitor general in the V.P. Singh government. This boyish-looking Supreme Court lawyer and former BJP student leader conceptualises publicity issues with the high command and state units. Other members include Gujarat's Narendra Modi, a committed RSS man and behindthe-screen strategist known for his following among Gujarat's Dalits. Superb slogan-creator and orator. Then there is Promod Mahajan, 47, RSS activist, Maharashtra strongman and all-India secretary of the BJP who was the brain behind Advani's rath yatra. Finally Jagdish Prasad Mathur, 73, is a practising pracharak whose main charge is to deal with the media, mostly regional.

### The RSS Link

The nexus between the RSS, BJP, and VHP is close and elaborate, with the Sangh providing the strong adhesive.

The RSS link: Every second office-bearer of the party at both central and state levels is or has been either a full-time RSS pracharak or member. The hold of the RSS over the party has been growing since 1988 when the BJP decided to regain its previous avatar Jan Sangh's militant Hindu posture. Earlier too the RSS leaders laid out the political line when they met with the apex BJP leadership for an annual conference at the RSS headquarters in Nagpur

and other RSS organisations take place regularly.

The Selection Process: Any candidate not selected by the district unit is unlikely to be picked up by the high command. Reason: the local RSS leaders are involved in the selection. The RSS has deputed its senior leaders for coordinating the selection process and putting the election machinery on a war footing. For example, Kaushal Kishore, a senior RSS leader from Delhi, camped in Lucknow during the selection of candidates and another leader Shanker Tiwary was helping the Bihar party unit. In Delhi, Suresh Vajpayee, a college lecturer and an RSS officebearer, was influencing the candidate selection.

Once the district unit recommends a panel of names, it is sent to the state parliamentary board. Invariably, the state-level RSS leaders participate in the screening and the list is then forwarded to the central parliamentary board. Says BJP General Secretary Govindacharya: "We trust the local party leaders because we feel that they have an equal, if not more, loyalty to the organisation's interest. We don't believe in imposing the people from above unless absolutely necessary." Indeed. In the last Lok Sabha election the party decided against fielding Arun Jaitley from a Delhi constituency due to pressure from local leaders.

Only the RSS cadres are being entrusted with important jobs like handling finances, distributing the publicity material, managing polling booths and pulling out voters from their houses.



PUBLICITY

# Flowery **Fantasies**

Party hammers home the Hindutva message in an aggressive campaign

HAT better place to snatch your electoral bread from than your opponent's basket? That's what the BJP has done as it sets forth to feed the voters with dreams of a new India and win votes. "We have hijacked the stability slogan," says BJP General Secretary Govindacharya. And tagged it on ingeniously to nationalism. "Only nationalism can stabilise India," is one of their main themes. They are also projecting their party as the only stable one.

The BJP has stolen more than just slogans from the Congress(I). "We have taken a leafout of their 1989 campaign and are stressing the fact that we are contesting alone," explains Arun Jaitley. Hence, their new slogan: India can't afford coalitions. As Atal Behari Vajpayee put it, the BJP will serve kheer and not the usual khichri sarkar of the others.

What the party is working on overtime is the campaign to project itself as a party apart. Staunch nationalism is their leitmotif, whether it refers to Kashmir, Punjab or Assam. Party members describe it as a tool against "the sub-national psyche". Posters, press advertisements, stickers and hoardings will project the BJP as the party which unites. Some of the slogans are: "While others use caste to divide, the BJP uses culture to unite", "Enough is enough. Vote вјр", "They divide, We unite. Give Unity a Chance", "Let's go for Ram Rajya."

Ayodhya will of course figure prominently in their publicity blitz. And it will be related to the issue of national unity."We will relate the Ram Janmabhoomi issue to the imposed dress codes in Punjab or in Kashmir," adds Jaitley.

The party is also trying to shed its fuddy-duddy image. An important vote bank is the youth. The party is hammering on the message that Ram equals unity and stability. Among



An aggressive poster campaign: emphasising unity

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campaign many the knick-knacks are paper caps with the slogan: "I am proud of my cultural heritage" stamped on it. Caps are a clever idea for more than one reason: they will keep away the scorching heat and sun and will hopefully bringing in the votes. The BJP strategists seem to have got their inspiration from the

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Pepsi advertisements using caps. Moreover, there are stickers with the same slogans and with the added sentence: "I shall vote BJP."

SHARAD SAXENA

A BJP T-shirt

Other accessories to be sprinkled along the campaign trail are bangles with Sita-Ram written on them, and T-shirts with the lotus symbol. Since all's fair in love and electoral campaigns, they've even usurped the bindis, which will have lotuses and even Ram embossed on them.

One of the major differences from the previous campaign is the sheer size of the publicity campaign. The BJP is, it is reliably learnt, contesting over 300 seats on its own. The party cavalcade is now going into the previously uncharted areas of Bihar, Gujarat, west Orissa, Karnataka and parts of Uttar Pradesh.

During the last election their newspaper campaign which involved only four insertions in about 40 newspapers cost Rs 40 lakh. This time the print media budget will be over Rs 80 lakh. They are placing advertisements in about 75 newspapers and magazines. The total publicity budget could be over a crore of rupees. Some of these will project quotations from leaders like L.K. Advani, A.B. Vajpayee and Murli Manohar Joshi on issues like reservations, Ayodhya, Kashmir and the sub-nation psyche.

In a novel move, Advani's open letter to Muslims, explaining that his party is not anti-Muslim will be advertised. Says a party member: "We want to tell them that for us the Muslim is not merely a voter. We want him merged into the mainstream like the Hindus, not more, not less."

Unlike some of the other parties, the BJP's publicity campaign is fairly decentralised. The party headquarters will send out their three main posters, rather their drafts and sticker samples to the state units. The party has hired the R.K. Swami advertising agency and individuals working for other agencies are also helping out.

The Maharashtra BJP has decided not to spend money on video raths. Instead, in larger villages, it will get party workers to organise shows at video parlours. The state unit is making two videos. One in the folk theatre tradition lampooning leaders interspersed with messages from party leaders and another which has leaders talking on relevant issues.

In big cities and towns, of course, neighbourhood volunteers will hire TV and video sets and show the cassettes in mohallas at night. Already, the Ayodhya cassettes are getting a re-run on cable networks in areas like Khetwadi.



Key chains with party symbol

Strangely enough. Dr J.K. Jain will not really be involved in the BJP campaign and his blood-curdling film on Ayodhya will be edited and softened. There are also eight and 20-minute versions of a film on Advani made in Delhi. "The youth are looking for strong leaders," says Govindacharya. There are also films on the achievements of the BJP-run states like Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh and another one which is supposed to project the party track record.

The BJP show has all the ingredients of a mega-budget potboiler. The question now is whether the crowds will lap it all up.

—MADHU JAIN and M. RAHMAN

KRANTI HINDVANI

# Little Boy Saffron

EN-year-old Kranti Hindvani is doing something that can be called really krantikari (revolutionary) for his age. The child has emerged as a key orator and crowd-puller at the BJP's poll meetings in Gujarat. His speeches are packed with colour, punch and the

mature approach of Vajpayee or Advani. He's been inevitably nicknamed Junior Vajpayee.

Last fortnight, at meeting after meeting in north and central Gujarat people were in raptures listening to him speak. In Ahmedabad a 20,000-strong crowd bullied film star Manoj Kumar to cut his speech short because they wanted to hear Kranti's punchlines: "Chaman ke mali ne khud chaman ko ujad dala, Ma ne ujada thoda, bete ne to pura ujad dala" (A gardener has himself destroyed the garden (Kashmir)—the son has finished what the mother started); "Ramji ki laat se V.P. Singh niche giro" (Ram kicked Singh made him bite the dust).

Kranti never fumbles for words, even when going over mouthfuls like Article 370 and "appeasement of minorities". He concludes with the party's usual ideological rhetoric and thunders: "Vijay uishchit hai; chalo Delhi; Delhi ke Lal Kile par bhagwa lehrayega; andhera chhatega, suraj niklega, aur kamal khilega" (Victory is assured. Delhiward hol The saffron flag will fly over the Red Fort. The sun will rise dispelling darkness. The lotus will bloom).

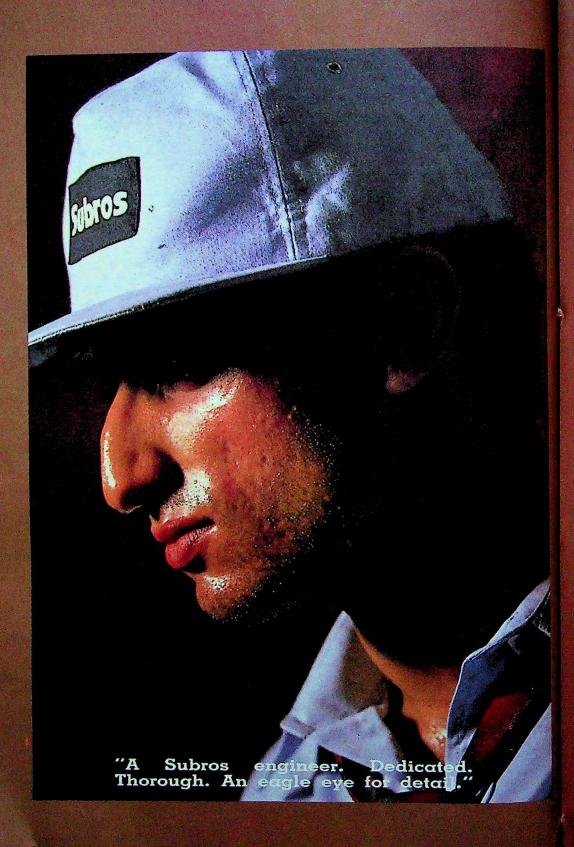
A student of class six in Valsad, Kranti made his debut in the 1989 campaign. His father, Chataram Hindvani, is a BJP worker and garments dealer.

Would he like to become a leader when he grows up? "That alone won't work. I'd like to get into my father's business." But at the moment Kranti is a star speaker.

—UDAY MAHURKAR



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# It's funny, the company that makes car airconditioners has to perspire the most.



Actually it's a way of life. Commitment. Tenacity of purpose. For nothing but the very best will do. A philosophy, we at Subros, have inherited and learnt from Nippondenso of Japan. Our technical collaborators. The world leaders in car airconditioners. No wonder Maruti reposed their faith in us. To provide original fitment for all company airconditioned cars and Gypsys. Much the same as Suzukis back home in Japan are also fitted with Nippondenso originals. With our 95,000 Subros fitted Marutis braving the summer Subros Limited heat on Indian roads, we feel our

beads of perspiration are well
worth the effort to keep you cool.



**BJP SUPPORTERS** 

# **Invasion of the Scuppies**

There's a new breed in town, the Scuppie or the saffron-clad Yuppie. Having exchanged the rose for the lotus, he is sounding the Hindutva battle-cry and proclaiming that being Hindu now means never having to say you're sorry.

HILE the BJP was out catching falling stars like Mithun Chakravarty, Manoj Kumar, Victor Banerjee, Maya Alagh and Dipika—where there's Sita can Ravana be far behind? So there's tele-Ravana Arvind Trivedi too—they didn't even notice what else was tumbling into their net. It was a species quite alien to them. The Yuppie, the young upwardly mobile urban professional, who wouldn't have been seen dead in their company a few years ago.

Today, it's the company he wants to keep. And the вјр is the party to go to for several executives, admen, intellectuals, journalists and lawyers. The cosmopolitan, well-travelled English wallah with his p's and q's in place is now changing colour. The Yuppie's turning Scuppie—saffron-clad Yuppie. His favourite colour is saffron, albeit pale. He's put away the rose for the lotus. He still sports his sparkling white tennis shorts—but there's a khaki lining. The gods for him might still be in a faraway mythical pantheon but, what the hell, what's wrong in calling oneself a Hindu, he asks.

The Hindutva battle-cry is no longer coming from those with dhotis and chotis, or from the temples. It's also being echoed, however softly, by those sitting in high-rise airconditioned offices, discussing forex and media planning. The Beautiful People-even jean-clad and Gucci-hoofed; and trailing Poison or Polo-can join the Ram brigade.

For a while the Scuppie was a closet BJP sympathiser. He worried about what his peers would think. "I move in a circle where people would be loath to admit that they could root for a party which is communal but I can now openly say so," says Raj Kapoor, 40, an executive with a multinational in New Delhi. The BJP men were after all "knickerwallahs", the Hindi speakers, the reactionary Jan Sanghis. In short, not modern.

Then there are those who are not quite out of the closet. They ardently believe in the party, even proclaiming it as the only party of the future. But in practical terms, they relegate it to precisely that distance—the future. For the present though they may vote Congress(I) because it is a known quantity and stability is still an attractive proposition.

But lately not only have they come out in the open, but aggressively so. Barely had a lawyer spoken out recently against the BJP and its stand on the Ayodhya issue, when over a dozen others pounced on him in the bar room of the Delhi High Court. When an urbane executive head of a large concern in the capital kept repeating at a party, "we have appeased the minorities for far too long. We need a Hindu Rashtra", he wasn't drunk or joking. And when journalist Swapan Das Gupta, formerly a Trotskyite, described L.K. Advani's Rath Yatra as a mass movement and wrote about the need for a national identity, he became the darling of

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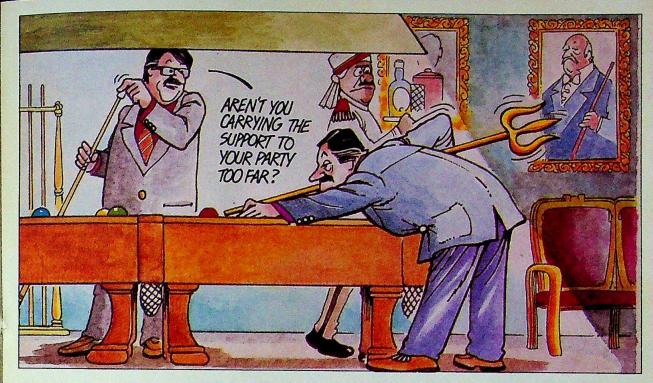
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The failure of the once-fashionable Left the world over is partially responsible for the emergence of a Hindu right. Buta major reason for the saffron rush could be the profound disillusionment and anger over what the politicians have done to India. Says Gautam Chadha, 35, a group sales agent

WHAT'S WRONG WITH RAM, YAAR. AFTER ALL HE WAS THE ORIGINAL YUPPY ... HE WAS A PRINCE!

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for US Air Rep who's normally supported the Congress(I): "We have reached rock-bottom—in world stature, economically, in every way. If the BJP is an alternative to a better end then so be it." A well-travelled, well-heeled magnate in his mid-40s and into export and arms has been feeling this way for a year. Everybody's had a chance. So, why not the BJP? The rest have monkeyed round with the economy and with law and order for so long." The вур men, of course, are beaming, even if a bit surprised by the number of these upmarket converts. Actor Victor Banerjee's passage to the BJP is quite a coup for them. The actor with the right accent says his decision to join the saffron rank was purely for intellectual reasons.

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ATIONAL Executive member Arun Jaitley believes that while the Ayodhya issue may have stirred emotions, the events in Jammu & Kashmir and in Punjab have hurt "the Hindu's sense of pride. He sees it as a concerted attack on his national identity and therefore takes pride in associating himself with his national heritage." In other words: Garva se kaho hum Hindu hain. Updated in the BJP's stickers to "I am proud of my cultural heritage".

The nouveau converts are largely unembarrassed at openly stating their neq-fundamentalism, even if they're not really sure what Hinduism is all about. Hindutva is important for them because India, they think, is the only country in the world where the majority is not in control, where a majority community holiday is cancelled to make place for minority holiday demands, and where, in spite of a secular Constitution, the civil law is not uniform. Raghu Palat, 42, is a very highly thought-of Bombay banker. A practising Hinduunlike most of the other Scuppies—he got interested in the BJP after the fall of the V.P. Singh government. "Take England—all the holidays there are of the Church of England. They don't have Buddhist or Sikh holidays. But in India, everytime a

minority community needs a holiday, a Hindu one is scrapped." Clearly, Hindutva's come out of the shadows—largely over the last year. S. Lashminarayan, a 28-year-old accounts executive in a Madras advertisement agency, voted for a Muslim in the last election but vows he will never do so again. "Forty years ago the Christians were eating into the religion, today it is the Muslims, tomorrow it will be someone else. It is time someone championed the Hindu cause," says he.

Vinesh Gandhi, 27, a photographer and interior designer in Bombay, believes the Hindutva angle is largely a political stunt that will be abandoned once the BJP comes to power. "Advani and Vajpayee are clever politicians and perhaps it makes sense to woo 80 per cent of the population when everybody else goes for the 20 per cent."

The BJP is making inroads into the laminated world because of its cadres. Manish Shukla, 26, an accounts executive at Lintas is a BJP supporter as he firmly believes in a cadre-based system. "The communist parties don't fit in with my hopes, so what alternative do I have but the BJP?" While his Hindu friends are rather surprised by his attitude, his Muslim friends think he's turned "communal".

Similarly Samar Gupta, 28 is a marketing executiveturned-horticulturist. His family-father Ravi Gupta is head and owner of Trikaya Grey-are decidedly non-вјр, and opt either for the Congress(I) or the Janata Dal. Strangely enough, even Christians buy that line-such as Michael Dalvi, the former cricketer in his mid-40s. A former executive who's now set up his own consultancy, Dalvi says: "I'm a Christian but if religion can keep the country together, let it."

Neo-fundamentalism's also getting to be the "in thing". People in Calcutta's cocktail circuit might talk in traditional terms of the Congress(I) or the CPI(M), but "to propound BJP theories guarantees a place in the social limelight", admits Mangal Patel, an electronics dealer in Calcutta.

The Scuppie's come ashore on the Hindutva wave. But religion was never really his scene. Often irreverent, his real gods were Mammon and the reigning deities of the corporate world. The closest he came was to the goddess of wealth Laxmi on Diwali. But now it's politic to be Hindu.

Being Hindu now means never having to say you are sorry. -MADHU JAIN with

RANJONA BANERJI in Bombay and bureau reports





**BJP GOVERNMENT** 

# What will it be Like?

HINDUTVA may be its main election plank but the BJP would not like to be saddled permanently with the tag of running a Hindu government. Realpolitik will clearly push Ram way down the BJP government's priority list. Principal Correspondent

ZAFAR AGHA examines what the response of BJP leaders would be to some key issues.

#### HOME FRONT



Kar sewaks in Ayodhya

#### RAM TEMPLE

Stance: Start construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya in October.

Action: Hedge on time-frame once in power. Negotiate with Muslim leaders for transfering the three dharmasthals (sacred places) at Ayodhya, Varanasi and Mathura to the Hindus and make no further demands. Avoid calling for demolition of masjid. Instead, continue talks to persuade Muslims to shift masjid. Give negotiations top priority.

#### MANDAL COMMISSION

Stance: Acceptable with some modifications.

Action: In order to continue broadening its base among its non-traditional supporters such as the backward classes, give priority to a new formula that would create more reservations for the poorer and the more backward among the OBCs. Widen the scope to include quotas for the indigent among upper castes. No decision yet on income ceiling for this category.

#### CENTRE-STATE RELATIONS

Stance: Decentralise.

Action: Will rarely use Article 356 to dismiss popularly-elected state governments. Will appoint governors in consultation with the respective state governments instead of imposing someone not acceptable. Will not dismiss governments presided over by other parties, as has been the wont of the Congress(I). The Finance Commission will be asked to explore increasing the share of Central revenues for states. Consider such major policy changes as allowing states to borrow directly from the Reserve Bank of India. Vague on its promise to create smaller new states for better administration, but doesn't mind making an exception in the case of Uttaranchal in Uttar Pradesh and Vananchal in Bihar. Any demand to the Centre pertaining to currency, defence, communications and foreign policy not acceptable.

#### **ARTICLE 370**

Stance: Scrap it.

Action: Vague on how to do it in the absence of its own two-thirds majority in Parliament required for the constitutional amendment to remove the controversial article. Promises to consult legal experts on the issue. Not clear on granting property rights to non-Kashmiris in Kashmir.

#### UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

Stance: Demand it.

Action: Play it cool. Will not rush for such a code. Will resolve the issue through negotiations and hope the Muslims accept changes on crucial questions like polygamy and instant divorce as has been done even in Pakistan.

#### **WAQF PROPERTIES**

Stance: Bar special treatment.

Action: Leave it to Muslims. Except where the Waqf Board is in dispute with Hindu religious places like Ram Janmabhoomi, the BJP will look at Waqf properties as an internal matter of the community. May help Muslims to manage them better if asked for assistance.

#### KASHMIR, PUNJAB, ASSAM

Stance: Hawkish.

Action: Immediate priority will be to try and create conditions that will be conducive to a political solution through the ballot. Unlike Congress(I), will not suppress aspirations of regional groups provided they are not secessionist-oriented. Will not arbitrarily dissmiss state governments once democratically elected.



Bomb blast in Punjab

#### **MINORITIES COMMISSION**

Stance: Abolish it.

Action: Go slow. Convert it into a human rights commission, with legal status at par with that of the Election Commission, with powers to look into any group grievances about discrimination. Details of constituting such a commission not yet finalised except for having eminent civil rights activists, legal experts and social workers like Sarvodya activists as members.

#### **EDUCATION POLICY**

Stance: Nothing original.

Action: Promises free education to children in the 6-14 age group. Intends to launch adult literacy programmes, but as teachers form a large constituency of party followers, any marked change in the prevailing policy highly unlikely. Has not made up its mind on encouraging private investments in educational institutions.

#### ECONOMY



A 320: encourage privatisation

#### THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Stance: Guarded on privatisation. Action: Top priority. Will encourage private investments in almost all public sector units like power, steel, airlines, urban transport, governmentowned hotels, telephone manufacturing units, except in "strategic" sectors of defence, railways and telecommunications and some areas in oil industry. In theory clear about introducing competition in public sector but vague about the level thereof.

#### THE MRTP ACT

Stance: Redefine.

Action: Priority. Instead of the size of an industrial house its market share in a specific area, say steel manufacturing, will be the basis of assessing monopoly in market. But undecieed on how to assess this share.

#### **FOREIGN INVESTMENTS**

Stance: Strict regulations.

Action: Disallow foreign investments into sectors where indigenous activity possible. Restrict it to hi-tech areas, but encourage it in export-oriented units and import-substitution areas. Ban multinationals like Coca Cola from entering the Indian market. Jay Dubashi, member of the party's economic think-tank, is vague about the sagacity of restricting foreign investments in the face of foreign exchange crunch.

#### **BUDGET-MAKING PROCESS**

Stance: Involve the public.

Action: Top priority. The Government will give detailed reports about the status of the country's economy every three months through Parliament. Will involve wider public and business community participation in budgetmaking exercises by making advance

announcements about direct and indirect taxes, as it is done in the US where the President announces his tax proposals six months in advance.

#### RESERVE BANK OF INDIA

Stance: Give autonomy.

Action: Slowly convert it into an autonomous body, like the Election Commission, to avoid control of the Finance Ministry which has been forcing the RBI into unnecessarily printing currency that leads to inflation and devaluation of the rupee-Central American banks to be the model.

#### PLANNING COMMISSION

Stance: Restructure it.

Action: Maintain the existing pattern of five-year plans, but the long-term objective is to restructure the commission to fit the party's overall economic philosophy of decontrolling and delicensing. Exact model not yet developed. Encourage the commission to look into fiscal aspects of planning too and interact with the state governments at frequent intervals instead of the present once-a-year interaction.

#### **FOREIGN EXCHANGE CRISIS**

Stance: Avoid big loans.

Action: Avoid going to the IMF as the party believes that the \$2-billion (Rs4,000 crore) presently sought from the IMF can be mobilised short-term from unutilised project-aids which amount to \$20 billion (Rs 40,000 crore). The project-aid donors will be requested to spare 1 to 2 per cent of the aid, generating over Rs 1,000 crore. the rest will be mobilised from NRIs who will be given massive incentives to invest in the country (specifics yet to be worked out). Long-term measures to overcome the BoP crisis, according to Dubashi, are strict fiscal discipline, encouraging foreign investments in restricted areas and boosting exports. But dynamics still to be worked out.

#### IMF CONDITIONS

Stance: Resist.

Action: Not to accept the IMF conditions except for opening up the economy to internal competition. Will continue with subsidies, as the idea of transfer of money from high to low income groups is acceptable in principle. May go for some subsidy adjustments but the exact policy will be formulated later.

#### PERSONAL INCOME TAX

Stance: Lower rates.

Action: Provide relief to the middle classes and professionals on income tax. Make efforts to prevent tax evasion but the means of bringing about the changes in tax structure will be decided after coming to power.

#### FERA

Stance: Review it.

Action: The regulation is acceptable in principle as the party is disinclined to throw open the Indian market to multinational corporations. But will review the act entirely in order to regulate foreign investments.

#### **OCTROI AND SALES TAX**

Stance: Abolition.

Action: Top priority. On assuming power will immediately like to implement its old promise of abolishing octroi and sales tax-experts will look into how to compensate losses. Important measure for the urban trading class vote bank.

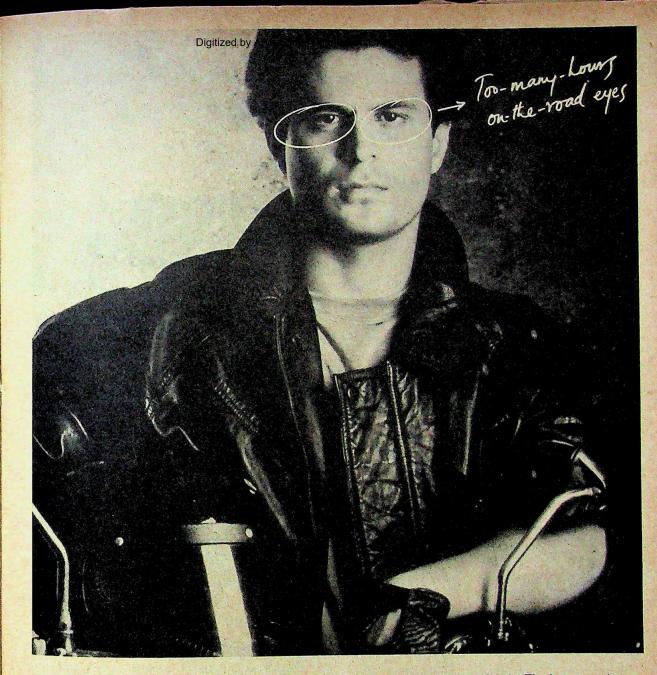
#### FOREIGN AFFAIRS



NAM meet: changing track

Stance: Reject non-alignment.

Action: Will do away with 'Nehruvian' concepts of non-alignment and priority to friendship with the socialist blocks. "NAM is dead." says BJP Vice-President K.R. Malkani who talks about transforming India into a key pole in the emerging multi-polar world. But vague about how to achieve this. Regarding Indo-US ties, some BJP leaders want to move closer to the US. others suggest equidistance from the US and Soviet Union. Emphasis on close relations with Pakistan and Bangladesh which, Malkani says, are "our estranged brothers". Abide by Simla accord and strive for a common subcontinent market.



Long rides + blinding glare + exhaust fumes = tired eyes. And rubbing them won't help. Tired eyes need safe, gentle Optrex Eyebath. Use the eye cup to swirl the lotion around your eyes. It not only soothes and relieves, but also provides the eyes with a gentle massaging effect. Optrex Eyebath is used the world over with the same refreshing result: tired eyes relieved in a wink!



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## Bofors and HDW, Dynasty and Nepotism. . .

Can we allow dishonest leaders to look us any longer?

Betrayal, thy name is Congress.

Betrayal of trust

How else do you describe the compromising of the nation's defence and risking of people's lives for personal gains?

By a government that's supposed to represent the very people whose trust it so freely betrays!

Bofors, HDW, Westland Helicopter, Airbus A-320...

How else do you describe deal after deal by a government at the behest of a few big business?

Betrayal of democratic values

What else do you call the determined efforts by the Congress to impose one family rule with all its attendant autocracy?

The mockery of Supreme Court judgements through amendments to the law; the arbitrary supercession of senior judges of the highest court in the land?

How else do you describe that unforgettable nightmare called the Emergency?

How else would you react to the

assaults on press freedom, subversion of bureaucracy and other institutions by successive Congress governments?

**Enough is Enough** 

We've tried the rest.

And paid the price.

Now is the time, to go with the BJP.

Have you ever heard a commission of inquiry indicting a BJP leader on charges of corruption?

Wasn't it the BJP that fought every single assault on democractic institutions like the judiciary and the press, or the subversion of the bureaucracy?

The BJP. A party committed to a clean administration, independent media, and a fearless judiciary.

Led by people of unquestionable integrity.

Committed, like you, to the true meaning of nationalism — Equality for all; Appeasement of none.

You can make it happen.

And your chance is now.

Vote BJP.

# LET'S GO FOR RAMRAJYA LET'S GO WITH BJP

To liberate all forms of life from fear, is my vow To Indians, Ram is an ideal, a symbol of integrity, justice and compassion.

RAM\*
Freedom from fear



ROTI
Freedom from want



INSAAF
Freedom from discrimination

RK SWAMY/BBDO BJP 6

CO



RAM AND MANDAL

# **An Existential Dilemma**

Caste and the disputed Babri Masjid have become central to the May polls but intellectuals suggest that new doctrines will have to be found to replace old ones.

Asians in Britain have periodic bouts of angst over whether they are more British or Asian. In the US, blacks ponder on what is primary—their African background or their Americanness. Muslim minorities the world over wonder what comes first. Their faith or nationality. Majority communities rarely suffer such agonies of identity. That's why the issues thrown up by mandir and masjid are so riveting. The May election will mark a watershed. It will reveal whether Hindus consider themselves Hindus first and Yadavs or Harijans second or vice versa.

The sheer fact that no-one really has any idea which way the decision will go has been enough to provoke intense debate among the intelligentsia. The mandir/masjid controversy is a big imponderable. "Never before has the Indian electorate had to face such intense communal and casteist slogans," says columnist Kuldip Nayar who has covered virtually every national election. Accustomed to thinking in terms of western models of politics and voter behaviour, intellectuals are uncertain how pervasive the Ram factor will prove to be. "Even Gandhi used religious symbols like Ram raj," points out T.N. Chaturvedi, former auditor and comptroller general and a recent convert to the BJP. No one

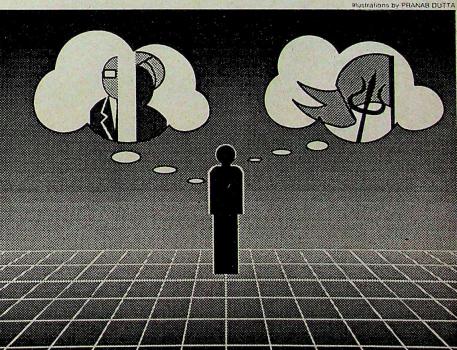
denies this. Rajmohan Gandhi, a scholar-turnedpolitician concedes: "The very name of Lord Ram has considerable appeal."

Even Marxist intellectuals are not willing to write off the Ram factor in this election. But their perspective is slightly different. For them communally-tinted issue, like the construction of the Ram mandir at a disputed site suddenly leaping to the centre of politics, has to be understood as the culmination of a process which has been simmering for some time. Politicians have always exploited caste and communal factors for votes. The BJP, according to this view, merely went a stage further. "The success of these primitive methods of mass mobilisation encouraged the BJP to try to build a large Hindutva constituency," says Professor Harbans Mukhia, a historian

Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Opinions differ on whether the BJP has really succeeded in building a large Hindu constituency exclusively loyal to it but some academics and political experts feel the Hindutva plank has never had such widespread appeal among the people as it does now. Kuldip Nayar, for instance, talks of a "Hindu consciousness" gripping the urban upper castes, though he is not sure how this will translate itself into votes. Madhu Limaye, a socialist who turned to writing after retiring from politics, refuses to accept that any unified Hindu vote bank exists. But even he does not rule out the chances of the BJP doing very well in certain states.

Professor Basheeruddin, an academic from the Centre for Policy Research, believes the appeal of the BJP extends beyond the upper castes to the backwards and Harijans because it is so specific and concrete. The Mandal factor, in contrast, is more amorphous. It has economic appeal and attracts the underdog by promising a share in the spoils of power. But divisions among the backwards may prevent the welding of a unified vote bank based on Mandal. The Yadavs and the Kurmis are generally affluent, land-owning groups. These castes will generally rally round Mandal hoping for further gains. But other backwards, with "lower political



The elections will reveal whether Hindus consider themselves Hindus first and Yadavs, Harijans second or vice versa, but there seems to be no way of finding out which way the decision would go.



## भारतीय निर्यात-आयात बैंक EXPORT-IMPORT BANK OF INDIA

CO

#### FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS: APRIL 1990-MARCH 1991

GENER	GENERAL FUND	
AT YEAR END 31ST MARCH 1991	Rs. (crores)	previous year %
- TOTAL ASSETS	1994	16
of which LOANS, ADVANCES & BILLS	1315	18
- OWNED FUNDS	377	13
of which RESERVES	120	22
- BORROWED FUNDS	1338	13
- GUARANTEES OUTSTANDING	618	4
FOR THE YEAR APRIL 1990-MARCH 1991		
- TOTAL INCOME	161	17
-NET INCOME (After Interest, Expenses,		
Depreciation, Provisions)	31	13
FUNDED OPERATIONS		REPORTED A
- COMMITMENTS IN PRINCIPLE	1060	169
-SANCTIONS	1043	9
- VALUE OF EXPORT CONTRACTS FINANCED	1389	44

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consciousness" may not come round to Mandal.

The widespread feeling in certain political circles that the BJP will do better than in 1989 is not shared by all scholars. There are three schools of thought amongst those who think its chances are overrated. One school cites a very liberal and moderate Indian ethos as a factor that will work against the BJP's strident communal election propaganda. "Indian society does not accept extremes," says Professor Harbans Mukhia, pointing out that during 500 years of Muslim rule, the Islamic Shariah failed to become the law. In other words, even Islam had to come to terms with this "liberal ethos".

The second school bases its scenario on simple arithmetic. Last time, the BJP had seat adjustments with other opposition parties. This time, it is fighting alone. Not to

when the then Bharatiya Jan Sangh made cow slaughter an election issue. It secured six out of seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi, 12 in Uttar Pradesh, three in Rajasthan, 10 in Madhya Pradesh, one each in Haryana. Punjab, Chandigarh and Bihar. It was the only time in post-independent India that a party contested elections purely on a communal issue and secured a good number of seats. "But the Jan Sangh's influence remained confined only to the Hindi belt," points out Madhu Limaye. The obvious conclusion he draws from the analogy is that BJP support in 1991 will also remain confined to pockets.

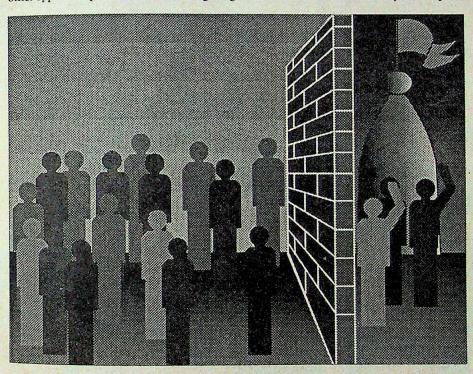
The Congress(I) is busy wooing all communities and groups. Syed Shahabuddin, a minority community hero before the 1989 poll, badly burnt his fingers after launching

his own Insaaf Party. Not only did he lose his preeminent position as a Muslim leader but he was also defeated in the elections. "Politicians may give a communal and caste colour to economic problems but such electoral planks will always fail to find national acceptability," argues journalist Sham Lal.

Thanks to mandir, a new issue dominates scene. electoral The BJP has made "secularism versus pseudosecularism" a central concern. Thanks to Mandal, a new class of political leaders may emerge, composed of prominent members of the backward and Harijan castes. With old political moorings having crumbled, everything is in a state of flux as India gropes its way towards a new political identity.

The 1991 election will be a watershed because the old foundations of the Indian state are being re-

shaped. New doctrines will have to be found to replace the ones that are no longer working. It might even be perceived as part of a wider ideological crisis afflicting the western world-the "end of history" proclaimed by Francis Fukuyma on the death of socialism in eastern Europe. Socialism itself, which used to be a reassuring old slogan in nearly all earlier elections, is passe and irrelevant. "Even the Congress(I) hasn't mentioned it this time in its manifesto," Sham Lal points out. While it would be overstating the case to say the country is going through a kind of Nietzschean "re-evaluation of all values", a fundamental revision of previously accepted ideas is firmly underway. Whatever emerges from this revision will largely determine the future character of the Indian state. In the meantime, however, intellectuals are fearful of the possible violence which might erupt within the flux, of what Kuldip Nayar, talking about his recent travels, ominously calls "shades of pre-Partition days". -ZAFAR AGHA



Some intellectuals assert that the issues will have only a limited appeal as people have too much sense to be carried away by divisive slogans and that Indian society does not accept extreme positions.

mention the fact that it has virtually no base south of the Vindhyas or in the east, which together account for over 200 Lok Sabha seats. Dr Karan Singh, an acknowledged scholar of Hinduism, asserts that the mandir (and Mandal) issue will have only a limited appeal: "People have too much common sense to be carried away with divisive slogans." He does not see the BJP getting a majority.

HE Mandal factor will be a further complication. It will be the main challenge to any unified Hindu constituency. "Caste," claims P.N. Haksar, former principal secretary to Indira Gandhi, "is the primordial unit of Indian society." Even some BJP leaders acknowledge the importance of caste but they argue that Hindutva supersedes it.

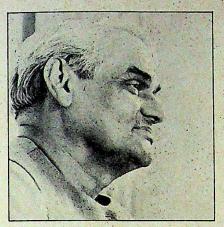
In their efforts to fathom the turbulence shaking the foundations of Hindu society, the intelligentsia are peering into the past to find a parallel. The only other time when a Hindu issúe became a party's major poll plank was in 1967

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# Enows, is enough.

R K SWAMY/BBDO BJP 8214

MOCE IN EXCIONION DIGITAL STREET, ACTUAL ACT



For years, we allowed the Congress to divide our nation.

Sacrifice our stability for its self interest and dynastic rule.

State after state was alienated from the rest of the country, as it stuck to its seats of power.

Congress and corruption became two sides of the same coin.

And then, Congress defectors took over.

They too split and splintered. Defected and discriminated.

And yes, regrouped and realigned.

If Congress used minorityism to divide us, their worthy successors chose casteism to tear us apart.

Turning Indians against Indians.

Brothers against brothers.

And now things have gone too far.

Terrorism and militancy have become tools for separatism.

A Janata Dal Chief Minister wants his state to secede from the nation. His party wants recruitment to the police

and paramilitary forces on religious basis.

The Congressmen, past and present, want to protect infiltrators in Assam and West Bengal, but are blind to the sufferings of Hindus in Kashmir.

And now, in its manifesto, the Congress (I) promises job reservation on the basis of religion.

To top in all, kar sewaks had to face bullets in Ayodhya, in their peaceful struggle to reclaim the hallowed soil that's precious to our heritage.

Over 200,000 Kashmiris have had to flee their homes for want of protection — the single greatest failure of pseudo secularism.

Today, our pride is in peril. Our identity is at stake.

#### Enough is enough.

We've tried the rest.

And paid the price.

Now is the time, to go with the BJP.

The Bharatiya Janata Party.

The only party that has consistently fought every threat to our stability and culture.

From Article 370 to Ayodhya.

The BJP. A party characterised by internal discipline and stability.

Led by people of unquestionable integrity.

Committed, like you, to the true meaning of nationalism — Equality for all; Appeasement of none.

You can make it happen.

And your chance is now.

Vote BIP.

# LET'S GO FOR RAMRAJYA LET'S GO WITH BJP

"To liberate all forms of life from fear, is my vow" To Indians, Ram is an ideal; a symbol of integrity, justice and compassion.

RAM\*
Freedom from fear



ROTI
Freedom from want



INSAAF
Freedom from discrimination

**L** am proud of the

economic changes. We have

started attracting foreign

investment. We are moving

towards making Pakistan

an open market."

MIAN NAWAZ SHARIEF

# "Let's solve the Kashmir problem honourably"

WHEN he took over as Pakistan's prime minister, not many gave Mian Nawaz Sharief, not yet 40 then, much of a chance for survival. In just six months now, he has turned the tables, riding a popular wave which, significantly, is more or less of his own creation. The sweeping economic liberalisation (see Open for Business in business section) is only one of his achievements. He has been able to sort out, at least for the time being, the contentious problem of the sharing of Indus river waters between Pakistan's provinces, the question of provincial share of federal finances and has been able to keep both military and the mullahs at bay.

Owner of the widely diversified Ittefaq group of companies (annual turnover more than Rs 1,000 crore), Nawaz Sharief has used a mix of Punjabi bonhomie and entrepreneurial skills to get out

of sticky political situations like the differences between him and his army brass over his policy on the Gulf issue. His aides describe with relish how he used persistent lunch diplomacy to bring unhappy generals around to his line of thinking.

His brother Shahbaz Sharief, 38, though without a portfolio or an official position (other than being a member of the National Assembly), has emerged as his main troubleshooter-at-large. Last fortnight he was leading an effort to pacify the Mohajir Qaumi Mahaz, whose relations with the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (1J1) have been strained.

Neither a feudal, nor a fundamentalist or a fauji, and thus an unfamiliar kind of factor in Pakistani politics, Nawaz Sharief has now emerged as perhaps the most significant leader in Pakistan's history after Ayub Khan who instituted major economic reforms in the 1960s.

The pace of economic change is scorching. So scorching that an entire dimension of the Government and bureaucracy is disappearing. Chaudhri Shujaat Hussain, a minister in the federal cabinet, underlined this while describing his portfolios to INDIA TODAY: "I am the industry and interior minister. But the Industry Ministry won't be there in a week or so. So you can just say interior minister. The man is moving so fast."

Nawaz Sharief has his problems too. The very pace of economic change could go horribly wrong—as in Latin America. Or the increasing pressure from the United States on the nuclear programme and the suspension of aid could become a difficult issue.

Most tricky of all will be the passage of the controversial Shariat bill. He has come out with what he calls a "consensus" bill which is much milder in its application than the one presented by Benazir Bhutto's government in 1990. But this is one issue where he would like to move slowly, that is, if he has his way with the mullahs, many of whom happen to be III allies.

Power has not changed the quintessentially Punjabi life-style of Nawaz Sharief though he regrets having to give up jogging and cricket-his regular passions. He still conducts a low-key yet informal political style and is slowly getting over his notorious shyness in facing the press. At Lahore's stately Freemason's Hall. now used as a state guest-house, Nawaz Sharief spoke to Features Editor Shekhar Gupta and Senior Associate Editor arun Chacko for nearly two hours, often breaking into Punjabi, truly his preferred language. Excerpts:

Q. How do you look back on your first six months in power?

A. By the grace of God we got a strong mandate from the people. People gave me an overwhelming majority to solve longstanding problems. We have applied ourselves to the task. There were so many problems to be sorted out from pre-Partition days. The division of Indus water among the provinces, for example. This was a constant source of discontent and friction between the states. We have sorted it out, not through a dictatorial decision or a court verdict but through an accord. We were working at it even before we came to power, as we were on the accord dealing with the sharing of national resources by the provinces.

Q. And the economic changes?

A. This is what we are really proud of. There were all kind of

fears. But the feedback now is so good. The stock-market index has reached unprecedented levels. We have already begun to attract foreign investment. Foreign exchange reserves, despite all the fears about the flight of capital, have gone up. We are rapidly moving towards making Pakistan an open market. Basically, I want minimal government. A government that is small but efficient. The Government must do only what it must do. It must not do what it need not do. The Government has no business to run industry, hotels, cement plants, restau-

rants, or architecture consultancies. It makes no sense.

Q. But won't such an opening up deprive your villages of

A. No. Basically, the villages need employment. The Government, with any amount of resources, cannot generate so much employment. Only the private sector can. So unemployment being the nation's greatest problem, we have to set up more industry. We have completely exempted all investment in rural areas from tax.

Q. But even that will not take care of the needs of rural finance.

A. We have thought of that. As we privatise our banks we have decided to convert one into a rural bank. Preferably, we would like the private sector to run it. But if it doesn't. I don't mind if the Government does.

Q. Have you, at any stage, been worried about the pace of change?

A. Let me tell you, people scared us. They painted a dark picture of the future. But I said that in the larger interests of the country, the decision must be taken even if there was a risk

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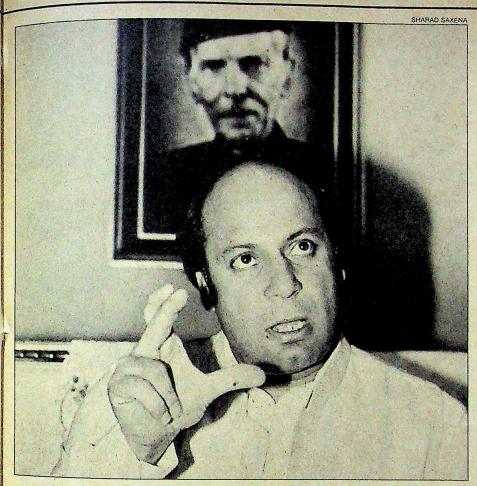
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Q. Controversy has dogged your new Shariat bill.

A. I am not a fundamentalist. I believe that Islam is a faith of progress and welfare. The Shariat bill was never supposed to create a theocracy and will not create a theocracy.

We took it and the results are all positive. We have allowed free foreign exchange transactions. Any foreigner can now open a foreign exchange account in Pakistan.

Q. Even we Indians?

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A. Yes. You are foreigners, aren't you? Tomorrow if Shekhar Gupta wants to set up an industry, he can do it. You may land at the airport with ten million dollars but you have no need to tell anyone where it came from. No form has to be filled. You may open an account. Similarly when you leave with the money no one will ask questions. What now remains to be done is to make the rupee a freely convertible currency. We are just one step away from that.

Q. Is that the key to growth? A. Industrial growth depends on two things. One, the availability of finances. Two, a good environment. This means that people should not have to go through regulatory mechanisms. We have done that. There is no licence. No investment limit. You don't have to come to the Government. Just make your feasibility report and go to the banks for money. Now I realise that this could be negated if the banks are not fully privatised. So that is the topmost priority.

Q. What will you do with the other public sector units? A. Sell them. Right now 40 such units are on sale. I believe this is the largest such sale in world history. I agree that many are still not viable and may not sell. So we will only be too happy to scrap them and give away their assets to the Q. What will happen to the employees?

A. They will get 12 to 18 months' notice or a golden handshake. You see there is a lot of corruption if the Government gets involved in running business. There is too much control, too much discretion. No one has a stake in what is going on. Workers spend all their time in the streets. Either they are not paid properly or they are paid out of the state's resources which should be spent instead on development programmes. Look, I am quite clear. I am not going to subsidise inefficiency or underwrite corruption in any way.

Q. Where will the money come from for the kind of growth

A. You have to tap the money outside the system, the unrecorded money or what you call black money. In the case of new industries, we have announced that for a year we will not ask where the money came from. Why should this money not come into the profitable economy? We found that in the last few years too much money was going into real estate. Why should it not come into industry?

Q. You don't think black money is dirtu?

A. Nothing is really dirty as long as you clean it after some time. I have to increase the national kitty. There is no dearth of money though some may be outside the system.

Q. Even drug money?

A. My philosophy is different. If we do not allow any money to become part of the national economy or take too legalistic a view, it will go back into drugs, crime and smuggling. Drugs

#### PRESENTS



MAHARAJAPURAM SANTHANAM

(Vocal)

Sankari Samkuru; Ram Ninu Naminna; Himagiri Tanaye/ Padasanati Munijana; Ehi Annapurne; Shanmukham Bhaja



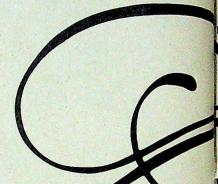
A 91008 HARIPRASAD CHAURASIA (Flute) Lalit/Bhoopali



M. BALAMURALI KRISHNA (Vocal) Needaya Rada; Vegamay/ Brihadeesvara; Omkara; Tillana



A 91001 BISMILLAH KHAN (Shehnai) Rageshwari/Shivaranjani



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C 91017 T. N. KRISHNAN (Violin) Maha Ganapatim; Mari Vere; Raghuvamsa Sudha/ Sarasaksha;

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C 91014 V. DORESWAMY IYENG (Veena) Venkatasaila Vihara; Chintaya Mal Ghana Ragamalika Tanam; Till

Kausi Kanl

ALLA RA Mat

ALS



A 91003 RAVI SHANKAR (Sitar) Asa Bhairav/ Kausi Kanhra & Mishra Ghara Dhun

KHAN

aranjani



A 91004 **BHIMSEN JOSHI** (Vocal) Ramkali/Shuddh Kalyan



A 91002 MALLIKARJUN MANSUR (Vocal) Shukla Bilawal/Raisa Kanhra & Adambari Kedar



A 91007 PANDIT JASRAJ (Vocal) Bairagi Bhairav/Darbari Kanhra



A 91006 KISHORI AMONKAR (Vocal) Ahir Bhairav/Sampurna Malkaus



A 91010 SHIV KUMAR SHARMA (Santoor) Bhoopal Todi/Kirvani

# HOICE

ATLASSICAL M USIC



A 91013 LLA RAKHA & ZAKIR HUSSAIN (Tabla) Matta Taal/Jai Taal & Pashto



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are a worldwide menace. That does not mean we should not attract some of the money away from that business.

Q. How serious is the drug problem? How high is it on your list of priorities?

A. To me all priorities look so important it is difficult to number them as one, two, three and so on. I think I have a lot of number one priorities. Drugs is one of them. This year our crackdown has been the severest. We have done aerial spraying using defoliants. We have destroyed large amounts of crops. The point is that if we do not bring some of this money back into the system, it will go back into drugs.

Q. Talking about economic resources, aren't you upset to see the amount of money spent on arms by India and Pakistan?

A. I think both countries have to sit down and talk about this. Pakistan cannot do this in isolation. We must sit down and resolve the outstanding issues between the two countries. We cannot afford to spend so much money on defence when our people face problems of food. shelter and But before clothing. we can move in that direction we need to banish our mutual fears.

Q. Are you ready to make a beginning?

A. I will be more than

willing to discuss all these issues with my counterpart in India. It is a solemn pledge. But I'd like to see the same spirit on the other side.

Q. Do you think it is possible to solve these problems? A. Besides Kashmir, they are all small matters. If Pakistan and Iran can live as friends, I don't know why there should be a problem with India. If Britain and France can be friendly with Germany, if the United States can be close to Canada, why not India and Pakistan? But Kashmir is such a serious matter, let me tell you, that if we don't resolve it, it will squeeze all the blood out of us. We should adopt a realistic approach and get down to it. That is what I told Mr Chandra Shekhar at Male. I said let's find a solution that is honourable for both countries.

Q. But given four decades of rigid posturing, can the Government in either country persuade its people to move from their old positions?

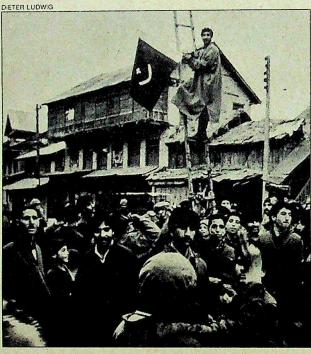
A. Why not? If the leaders do not exploit the issue in both countries it is possible. Look at the situation in Kashmir. In the last election, the voter turnout was 3 per cent. Now you cannot hold elections there. Do you want to live with this? Can you live with this? Isn't it your duty also to find a solution? For 40-45 years, we haven't found a solution to this problem. How long are we going to continue this bloody feud? Till it completely bleeds us?

O. You talk about a solution honourable to both sides. Do you have the outlines of any such solution

A. Well, I am not going to reveal it here, to INDIA TODAY.

Q. Is there a change in the Pakistani reaction to communal trouble in India and the Ayodhya controversy? Is there a toning down of rhetoric?

A. As for the Babri Masjid issue, the Indian Government. I must say, has taken a correct approach which we appreciate. As long as the Indian Government has this correct approach, we will support it.



Q. Can either government move from its old, rigid posture on Kashmir?

A. Yes. if the leaders do not exploit the issue. How long are we going to continue this bloody feud?

Q. But do you also understand the limitations of an Indian Government on this?

A. Yes, we do. But both sides have limitations on this. See what India is doing in Kashmir. It is a disputed territory and what is being done there causes great concern here. I say again-let us sit down and find a solution.

Q. Does Hindu revivalism in India and its shadow on the election campaign worry you? Are you worried about the prospect of a BJP government after the election?

A. I am sure the people of India will take everything into consideration while electing their government. For our part, we are happy to deal with whosoever represents the will of the Indian people. Whether prime minister is A.B. or C means the same thing to us.

Q. So you are not apprehensive about a BJP government?

A. Look, the people will elect the government they think best. I am not going by such apprehensions. You may remember that when the IJI was voted to power in Pakistan there was apprehension in India that it will be a fundamentalist government. All kinds of things will happen. But now isn't there a feeling that the 1JI Government is a pragmatic government which will live with India?

Q. Have you addressed yourself to the widespread concerns in India about Pakistani help for Punjabi and Chacha, Have you found a fob?



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Kashmiri extremists?

A. There is no such thing and I gave a solemn assurance to Mr Chandra Shekhar about it. As far as Punjab is concerned, it is entirely an internal matter of India. In fact, it is our sincere wish that peace returns to Indian Punjab as soon as possible. Look, these allegations go on. There are people here who say India is behind the violence and bomb blasts in Sind. There are lobbies on both sides. But we want to open a new chapter.

Q. But it is widely believed in India that the Punjab extremists with whom Mr Chandra Shekhar recently had

talks came out from hideouts in Pakistan.

A. Give us any evidence of that. In fact, Mr Chandra Shekhar has himself denied it.

Q. On internal politics, aren't you following vindictive policies against the Bhutto family and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP)?

A. No. I want to set healthy and honourable traditions. We want to strengthen democracy. In fact what she did was the ugliest thing. The way she victimised her political opponents and tried to tarnish the good name of my family. As for the case against Asif Zardari, it is purely a judicial problem. We have nothing to do with it.

Q. But there is a feeling that perhaps the Sind provincial government is going out of its way to hound him, perhaps even against your wishes?

A. You see, the government in Sind is facing a serious law and order problem. It has to deal with people of all parties, including the PPP and the IJI, who help dacoits and kidnappers. It cannot give special treatment to somebody just because of his political background.

Q. Are you worried by the increasing controversy over your new Shariat bill?

A. The new bill underlines my consensus approach. I believe that Islam is a faith of progress and welfare. This bill will take us in that direction. The Shariat bill was never supposed to create a theocracy and will not create a theocracy. As I have said to you earlier, I am not a fundamentalist.

Q. To move away from the subcontinent, how much of a problem is the suspension of US aid to Pakistan?

A. We are not very upset with the suspension of aid. And we have not requested the United States for any revival of aid. We have to decide whether we want to increase our dependence or try to stand on our own two feet.

Q. How do you react to the United States linking aid with your nuclear programme? As the leader of a sovereign nation, does it not upset you that you should be held accountable to another country for your nuclear programme?

A. We have said many times that our nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes. But yes, we certainly feel upset about it. It is an internal matter. We will not go and give an account to the United States on this. Aid or no aid. We should mind our own business. We do not need to give



Q. Aren't you being vindictive towards the Bhutto family?

A. No. I want to set healthy and honourable traditions. In fact, she victimised her political opponents and tried to tarnish the good name of my family.

any assurances to anyone.

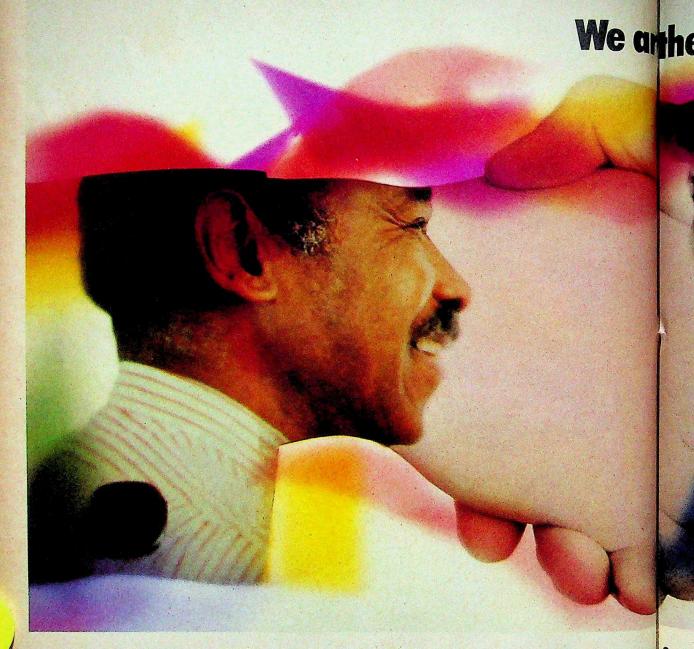
Q. Didn't the government you replaced follow a different policy—of going and pleading with the United States for

A. No comment. You can draw your own conclusions. My government's policy is to maintain good relations with the United States but to have no compromises on our internal affairs. And if our predecessors followed a different policy, we are not bound by it.

Q. It is often believed that your move towards economic liberalisation and other policy changes is a consequence of your own frustrations in dealing with the Government as a businessman. Is the pace of change an indication of accumulated frustration?

A. Yes. I used to get angry. Frustrated. I used to think about it. My heart used to burn. I used to say someone has to do something. But now that I am in that position, what I am doing is a source of satisfaction.

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# A Fatal Obsession

Benazir's involvement with her husband's trial has ruined both the PPP and her image.

By ARUN CHACKO in Karachi

We have kiss'd away our kingdom and all our provinces -Antony and Cleopatra

OR Antony and Cleopatra read Benazir Bhutto and Asif Zardari. For Benazir, the hard-headed and ambitious former prime minister of Pakistan, the manner in which her infatuation with husband Asif-currently in jail on a slew of serious charges-has undermined her political career is nothing short of dramatic. After her defeat in the last election, Benazir and her Pakistan People's Party (PPP) have rapidly diminished in strength and credibility and much of it has to do with Benazir's relations with her errant husband.

ASIF ZARDARI

# **Cool Customer**

ASIF Zardari showed no signs of living under the shadow of a possible death penalty when Senior Associate Editor ARUN CHACKO met him for an exclusive interview outside the courtroom where his trial on various charges is currently underway. Displaying remarkable confidence and savoir faire, Zardari seemed more interested in the outcome of the Indian elections than in his own uncertain future. A man with an incredibly attractive personality, it is easy to see why Zardari has acquired the reputation of being a ladies' man. Throughout the conversation he was full of warmth and old-world charm. Immaculately dressed and puffing his favourite Dunhill cigarettes, he cracked jokes about Pakistani society in the style of a true raconteur. Chacko's report:

FLL before his marriage to Benazir Bhutto, Asif Zardari had long had the reputation in Karachi society of being a hard-drinking, polo-playing, gun-toting man about town with a tendency towards violence and an eye for pretty girls.

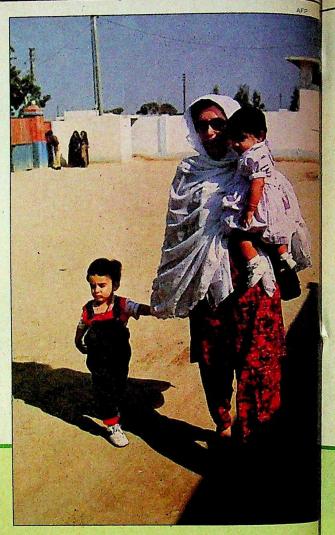
His former drinking mates still recall the bar and discotheque with glass walls in his house, the sofa set with a concealed liquor cabinet beneath, not to mention the umpteen women he was intimate with. Zardari liked to think he was the archetypal Sindhi feudal lord. But the reality was a little different. The Zardaris did not quite have the wherewithal to go with their class, nor the accompanying social status in this still feudalistic society.

They were also not quite Sindhi. having drifted into the province from Multan in the Punjab. Even at the time of marrying into the Bhutto family, the Zardari family's properties, including the local Bambino cinema, were believed mortgaged to the banks.

Marriage might have redeemed Asif's reputation a little, although not very much. He curbed his wilder tendencies. But his extra-constitutional authority during the time Benazir was prime minister and allegations about massive shady business deals, hardly added to the Zardari stature.

However, Zardari might be in the process of redeeming himself in the eyes of the Pakistani public. His deportment and behaviour as an undertrial for, among other things, alleged kidnapping and murder, have been exemplary. He is taking his prison sentence. which given his status is tantamount to solitary confinement, with fortitude and good cheer.

Others might have carped and complained about the frugal facilities and the loneliness. But uptill now. Zardari has put on a brave face. "I am as well as I can be in the present circumstances," he said cheerily, sitting on a bench outside the courthouse, a converted circuit house behind the US Consulate. "What can I do if everyone from the President to a junior bureaucrat is dying to convict me. If I am such a criminal. what was I doing outside jail before



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In reality, there are two factors which appear to have crippled the PPP. The first is the government crackdown on leaders and party workers on charges ranging from kidnapping to murder, especially in Sind. Believed to be the worst since 1983, this has led to a substantial erosion of support in all states, especially the politically crucial one of Punjab.

But easily the more potent factor is that PPP leader and exprime minister Benazir Bhutto appears to be paralysed because of her imprisoned husband. He could face the death penalty on at least the kidnapping and murder charges on which he is arraigned in the specially set up anti-terrorist courts (see box). This has undermined Benazir's former reputation for fighting political harassment. Her past resilience enabled her to bounce back even after the worst setbacks. The moment adversity struck, she would go to the people and generate a wave of mass support. She is not doing that now because all her energies are devoted to saving her husband's skin.

"Benazir is totally obsessed with Asif Zardari," declares Asif Khan, a party loyalist. "She will not sacrifice him under any circumstances whereas the party would rather let him hang." For Benazir the death sentence hangs over her and Zardari like Damocles' sword. The Nawaz Sharif Government might not be serious about convicting Zardari. It might prefer to let the matter

Benazir and children emerging from prison after visiting Zardari

my marriage to Benazir?"

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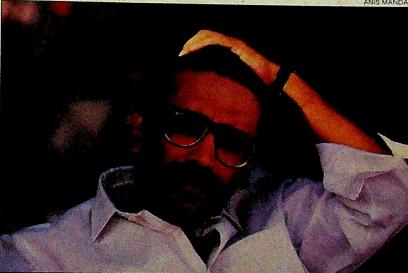
Because of the multiplicity of cases, Zardari is brought to court every second day after a one-and-a-half-hour drive from Landhi jail outside Karachi. This he considers a blessing in disguise. "With one case I would have come out just once a month," he says with relief. "This provides an element of normalcy." Like other high-security prisoners he is brought in a Toyota pick-up, sitting in the front seat sandwiched between an armed driver and guard. The back is packed with policemen, guns poking out of the canvas cover.

Heis always impeccably turned out in starched salwar kameez, freshly-laundered at a local hotel. At the court house, a specially appointed retired sessions judge and officials preside over the anti-terrorism court. "They have made false cases against me." he states. Nevertheless, he is philosophical about his fate. "I am not frightened about what they want to do tome. If it is written, so be it. It is fated. One comes and one goes. Basically what you leave behind is the record. In that I am slowly being exonerated."

His wife Benazir, suffering the indignity of regularly sitting through drag because its motive is not to remove her from the scene but to push her to the sidelines. Thus far, it has succeeded in marginalising her. Sharif's policy has already prompted the PPP to open up lines of communication with him. There is even talk of some PPP luminaries joining his government because the prime minister is busy trying to widen his political base as his conflict with President Ghulam Ishaq Khan becomes more intense with each passing day.

In terms of a family drama, the way Benazir has allowed her husband's emotional hold over her to damage her political career and the party's fortunes is the subject of incredulous discussion in all circles. The generally accepted psychological explanation for Benazir's absolute refusal to concede that her spouse might ever have done any wrong is believed to reflect herfragile family life. She returned from university in the West in 1977 to witness the assassination of her father, to whom she was devoted. She herself was constantly in and out of

ANIS MANDANI



legal proceedings with her husband, is much the worse for wear. Zardari, however, appears to be suffering no physical discomfort. He is lodged at Landhi Jail, used for juvenile delinquents, in a small six-feet-by-eight-feet cell with an attached toilet. The only furniture is a bed, table and chair. Despite a court order authorising a radio and television, he has yet to receive them although newspapers have been allowed.

He says he's a man of simple food habits, a ''dal-roti'' man. Food is brought once a day from Bilawal House, the family's Karachi fortress. Last week his sisters tried to bring him a treat—an almond cake—but it was turned away by the guards. Like all undertrials, he is permitted the dignity of wearing his own clothes. The absence of reading material is not a major problem since Zardari is not given to intellectual pursuits though he claims to be writing a book.

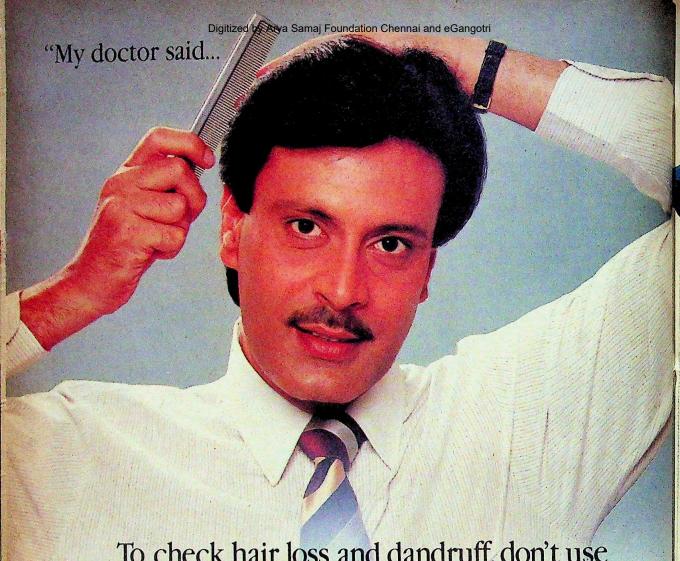
"You should not show any weak-

Asif Zardari: trial by fire

ness," he says with a smile. "They will just take advantage of you. But I sit around in court and smile. They do not know what to make of that. These guys have one foot in the grave and another on a banana skin. I will outlast the lot of them."

In his time of trial. Asif Zardari seems to be seeking refuge in God. He claims to have fasted during Ramzan, and is now very particular about saying his prayers. Zardari has been denied bail while other PPP supporters who have turned against the party have had no problem obtaining it. More than anything else, it is Zardari's position as Benazir's Achilles' heel that goes a long way to explaining his current predicament. That, and the time-tested dictum that those who are in the fast lane of Pakistan's politics seem fated to career out of control sooner or later.

-ARUN CHACKO



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Reference: (1) Windholz, M., Merck Index, 10th ed. p. 760, 1983 (2) Settel, E., Drugs & Cosmetic Industry, p. 121, 34, 1977 (3) Driscol, W.R., Drugs & Cosmetic Industry, p. 116, 42, 1975 (4) Krantz, J.C. et al, Pharm. Principles of Medical Practice p. 956, 1965 (5) Wade, A., Martindale, En. Pharmaco p. 502, 32, 1982

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detention and prison. Her brothers, to whom she was close, were forced into exile. One is now dead. She is believed to have serious differences with her mother, Nusrat. Her relations with her London-based sister, Sanam, are also believed to be distant.

"Benazir could not really have the kind of social life where she met men of her background and age group," a former aide remarked. "Asif Zardari was the first man she had a sustained relationship with. She was looking for security. He is the first man she has ever really been close to."

Whatever the explanations, the fact remains that her personal life is playing havoc with the morale of the PPP. Party leaders such as Iftikhar Gillani, the former PPP minister for law and parliamentary affairs, claim that the party's

Benazir with PPP leaders:

dwindling strength

image has suffered because of the court cases filed against party members: "The Government's tactic is to hound us. This makes the public suspect that there is no unified authority left in the party. that the central command has lost its efficacy and the party is in disarray.'

The election result, in which she not only lost the poll but also her stronghold of Sind, had a very demoralising effect. Despite PPP charges of widespread rigging, her position on the national political scene shrank. Nevertheless, to this day she has failed to analyse the causes of the defeat or to review party policies. At precisely the time when the party desperneeded organising and moraleboosting, she became caught in Zardari's personal quagmire. As Iqbal Haider, vice-president of

the Sind PPP, concedes: "We have organisational problems. We have been unable to carry out political activities in an organised and effective manner."

The lack of direction in PPP policies became transparent when Benazir left for the US on the day the Gulf war broke out. The Government was in a tight corner with 11,000 Pakistani troops aiding the Allied forces and Pakistani Army chief Aslam Beg differing with the Government on Pakistan's role. Benazir then appeared on American television to praise the Bush Government's policies. She stayed abroad for a month at a time when Nawaz Sharif's fledgling government was passing through its first crisis. She came under attack from the rank and file for missing a perfect opportunity to hit Sharif at a vulnerable moment.

Even the characteristics which distinguished the PPP from other parties (its mass support and grassroots base) have become blurred. Zakir Ahmed, a company executive who has worked for the party, observes: "The top leadership of the PPP no longer sees itself as a progressive party but rather as a status quo-ist middle-of-the-road organisation.

This is at variance with the opinion of the poor who have always viewed the PPP as their party and the only vehicle for change." No longer does the party have a radical wing. This was clearly reflected in the election manifestos of the PPP and the Islamic Jamoori Itthehad. There was hardly any difference between their stands on Islamisation, privatisation and foreign policy.

However, with 46 seats in Parliament, the PPP is still the largest single party. It is also believed that Benazir's support among the masses might be intact. Benazir herself has been piously claiming: "The PPP is still the party of the toiling masses, the weak, the labouring and the minorities. It stands for the dispossessed."

The PPP still has considerable support in rural Sind, despite Chief Minister Jam Sadiq Ali's brutal crackdown. But in Punjab the party appears to be in total disarray, with few seats in the Assembly and virtually no local

SHARAD SAXENA



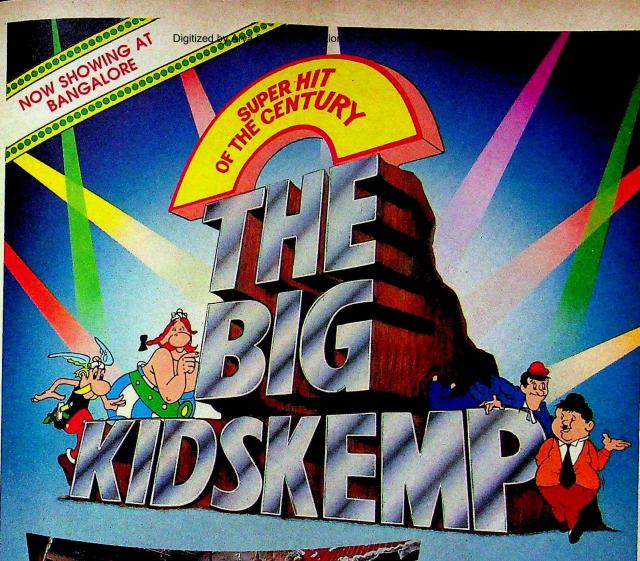
The members of the PPP are furious that Benazir is fussing **L** over her husband while the party is floundering.

leadership. In the North West Frontier Province the situation is not so bad, though the party here never had the strength it had in Punjab. In Baluchistan, the PPP is virtually non-existent.

The party considers itself to be under siege. "There is persistent persecution against the PPP-all monitored and governed by the President personally," says Haider. He also claims that most of the cases filed are criminal and PPP workers and leaders are not named in the FIR. Confessions. he alleges, are being extracted through torture and political leaders implicated on the basis of these confessions. These confessions are subsequently disowned by the people who made them.

There is some truth in this. After a March 11 statement condemning the PPP-Ghulam Hussain Unnar-who was accused in a kidnapping case—was permitted bail. He was also given back his former job as chairman of the district council in Larkana. Perhaps all is fair in love and politics. The trouble is that Benazir is clearly having problems distinguishing between the two.

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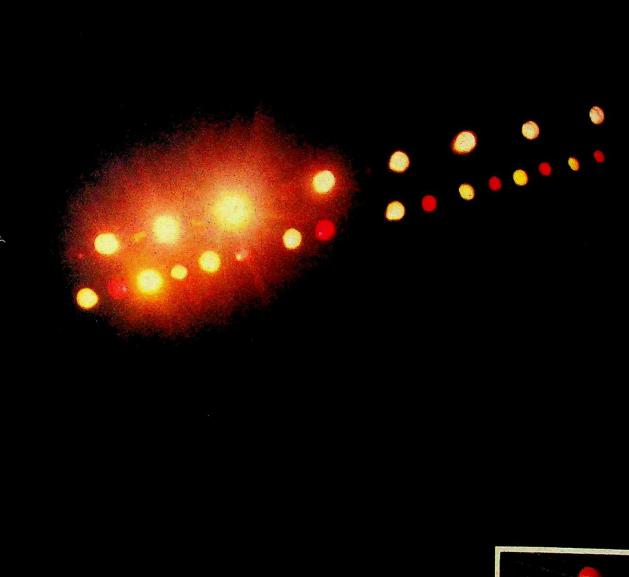
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**PUNJAB AND ASSAM** 

# A Bold Gamble

True to his adventurous, activist approach to the political game, Prime Minister Chandra

Shekhar at last decided to hold elections in the troustates bled Punjab and Assam. Defying the opposition from several national political







(From left) Chandra Shekhar, Seshan, Venkataraman

parties including the Congress(I) and fears of large-scale rigging and terrorist violence

ery by surprise as KANWAR SANDHU in Punjab and FARZAND AHMED in Assam report.

he confronted President R. Venkataraman

and Chief Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan

### **Battle for Peace**

#### Confusion looms as parties dither on polls

ROM the very start, uncertainty clouded the poll scenario in Punjab. Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar declared elections in the state to both Lok

Sabha and Vidhan Sabha, but the Election Commission delinked them from those in the rest of the country and delayed announcing poll dates.

The bureaucracy too dragged its feet. Officials from Punjab in a meeting with the Ministry of Home Affairs opposed polls, particularly to the Vidhan Sabha, at this juncture. There was also the invisible hand of the militants. To sabotage the revival of the electoral process, they stepped up their activities.

All the same, the political process did start fortuitously. The April 28 polls to the three municipal corporations of Amritsar, Jalandhar and Ludhiana elicited an overwhelming response-in terms of intensive campaigning and the number of candidates. Even parties like the BJP and the Left, which had vehemently opposed general elections in Punjab, participated.

Meanwhile, the Akali Dál led by Simranjit Singh Mann did yet another volte-face. At a Baisakhi function in Talwandi Sabo, Mann created a flutter stating that elections in Punjab will be fought on the issue of a sovereign and independent Sikh state. Mann apparently struck an extremist posture to placate the militants. But it may be in vain unless he toes their line in toto. None of the factions of the AISSF is likely to extend its unequivocal support which ensured his party's victory in the '89 Lok Sabha elections.

The Government too was trying to counter the growing intransigence of Mann. Chandra Shekhar held meetings with a group called the Coordination Committee for Solution of Sikh and Punjab Problem, convened by former IAS officer Gurtej Singh, and announced concessions like the release of all Sikh detenues against whom no case was pending and unhindered access for devotees to the Golden Temple. The committee claims to be apolitical but many of its members are in close contact with the Manjit Singh faction of the AISSF, which has assumed a political identity. Other militant leaders like Gurbachan Singh Manochahal and Sittal Singh Mattewal are also said to be favourably inclined towards the coordination committee. .

However, political observers feel that Chandra Shekhar's negotiations are mainly aimed at boosting his own image among the Sikhs since he is in no position to offer any major concessions

at this stage. The prime minister's strategy seems to be threefold-ensure the participation of as many militant groups as possible in the electoral process; ensure peaceful

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elections and at the same time, ensure that an effective counter to Mann is established in the state.

Already, the moderate Akali leadership is seriously considering rescinding its earlier decision to merge with Akali Dal (Mann) because Mann has not honoured his commitment to reconstitute the party. Said senior leader Sukhjinder Singh: "We are under increasing pressure from our rank and file to revive our entity and fight elections. The dilemma faced by the Badal and Longowal factions was either to go it alone or join hands with the militant groups. Akali Dal (Badal) has now decided to reactivate itself and to contest the elections as a separate entity. Prakash Singh Badal, the former chiel miniseer, said his party would contest about 74 Vidhan Sabha and 10 Lok Sabha seats and accused Mann of having failed to unite the three factions.

Meanwhile, the effort to form a common four-party front has made some progress. Leaders of the Congress(I), BJP, CPI and CPI(M) have been discussing strategy to counter militant sponsored candidates through one-toone contests. This idea was floated

he revival of political activity with the holding of municipal elections is a big step forward even as political parties squabble over elections.

Simranjit Singh Mann at Akali Dal meeting in Lopke village; and (below) Amritsar bomb victim: crucial phase

because in '89, the militant-sponsored candidates got much less than half the total votes polled but claimed 10 of the 13 Lok Sabha seats.

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ILITANTS on their part are not sitting idle either. The newlyformed Babbar Akali Dal, which enjoys the support of a powerful section of the militants, has decided against participating in the electoral process. With obvious reference to Mann's latest plank, its Convener, Kartar Singh Narang said in Amritsar: "This talk of 'azadi' through elections is all humbug and we don't buy it." The party fired its first salvo by shooting off eight questions to those desirous of contesting elections. It wants them to clarify their policy on militants if they come to power in Punjab. A categorical answer spells trouble—either from militants or the Government.

Already the Government has initi-

ated the unprecedented step to amend the Criminal Procedure Code to ensure that the civil and police officials are not hauled up for the actions carried out during President's Rule. This is being done following fears that a popular government in Punjab might start a

witch-hunt on coming to power.

The stakes are high but this time the Government seems to have decided to bite the bullet in the hope that, whatever the cost, an election will bring the militant fringe into the political mainstream.



HErestoration of the democratic process in this chaotic state looked so remote a possibility till recently that the very suggestion of elections has dramati-

cally shifted the focus from the rhetoric of secession and the activities of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) to the prospects of peace. So dramatic has been the impact that even ULFA announced that it would not interfere in the electoral process and extended the "ceas-fire" until further orders and announced that it would tefrain from taking penal action" against national parties. "This is a se-

## A Chance Beckons

#### As ULFA softens, all parties back poll move

quel to the demands made by the people of Assam asking for peace and tranquillity," ULFA General Secretary Anup Chetia said in a press release. Governor Loknath Mishra reacted with obvious delight saying: "I very well appreciate their gesture.

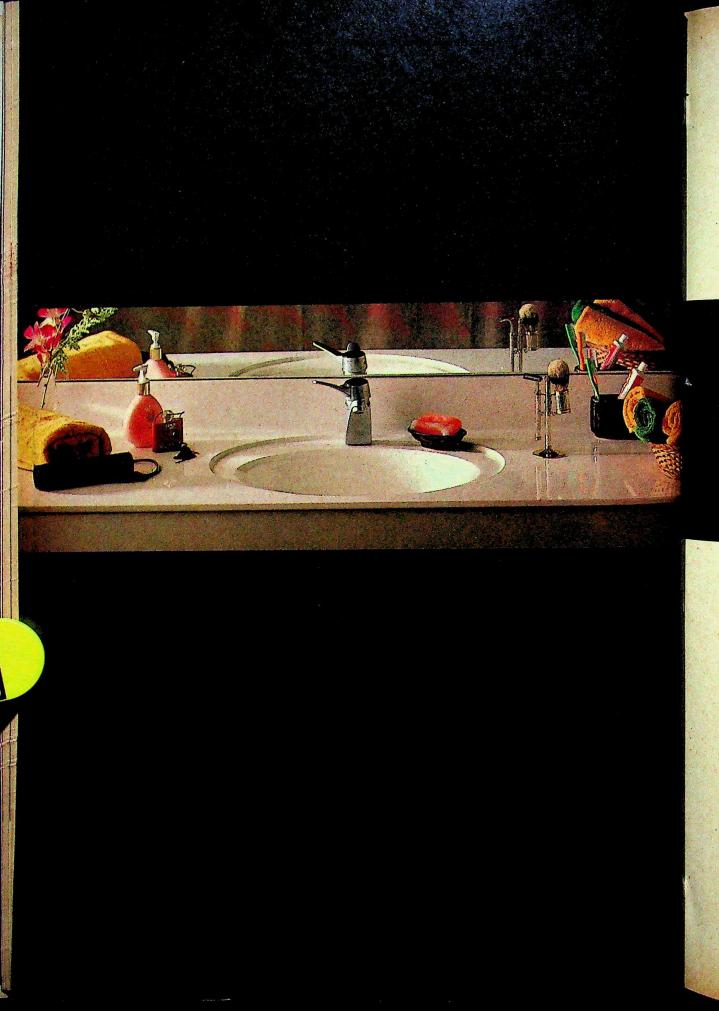
This surprising stand of the ULFA has in turn, given the other parties the courage to come out with statements supporting the move to hold elections.

And the administration has responded by suspending the army operation against ULFA as well as keeping in abeyance what the extremists refer to as "black laws"-

Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958 and the Assam Disturbed Areas Act 1955. Even the Congress(I) which seemed to have entered a state of comatose due to increasing attacks on its cadre-25 party workers have been killed since President's Rule was imposed on November 28, 1990-was quick to reactivate itself. Said Assam Pradesh Congress(I) General Secretary Swaroop Upadhyaya: "If ulfa is hones

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## SOMETIMES, LOVE MEANS GLYLING EACH OTHER

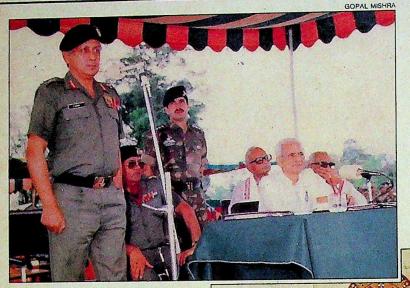
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With ULFA agreeing not to disturb the conduct of polls, other parties too have come out openly in favour of the political process being revived.

Lt-General Brar and Governor Mishra at IILFA surrender ceremony; (below) AGP Mahanta faction meets

then the situation will improve and the political process will start.'

In fact after the ULFA statement two factions of the Asom Gana Parishad-AGP and AGP (Reconstituted)-Janata Dal, Congress(S) and Left parties have supported the election move. Former chief minister and Janata Dal leader Golap Borbora argued that if the atmosphere in Assam was not conducive for elections neither was it in Bihar and Andhra Pradesh where the law and order situation is worse than in Assam. But according to Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, Chandra Shekhar had merely "tried to prove that he believes in the democratic process".

Chandra Shekhar anyway had been preparing to hold elections in the state ever since President's Rule was imposed. His intention could have been to politically finish off the Congress(I) in the problem states. The first clear signal of his intentions came when 162 ULFA members including some anchalik chiefs surrendered before the governor at Soolat in North Lakhimpur at an elaborate televised function in the presence of Eastern Command chief Lt-General K.S. Brar.

This happened on the eve of the visit of the prime minister, and ULFA Central Publicity Secretary Sidhartha Phukan claimed that the surrender was "stage-managed". K.N. Prasad, the retired IPS officer and the governor's senior adviser who is in charge of law and order and political affairs dismissed all such talk as malicious propaganda. "All who surrendered including anchalik presidents were activists, either trained or under training," he said. Those who surrendered have been released on bail.

The official version of the incident



detailed note in which he said the organisation apologised to the people for recent mistakes and "we will never repeat these mistakes". Suddenly it seemed that Operation Bajrang had served its purpose. The administration claimed that four months of army operation and mounting public pressure on the outlawed organisation had served its purpose and that ULFA was in disarray as supply lines were cut off.

AHANTA however struck a cynical note by saying that it was not for the first time that ULFA has made promises about not interfering in the political process. What is keenly being watched is how the split in the AGP is going to affect their electoral chances. There is tremendous pressure on the discredited AGP leaders to stop squabbling and to get their act together so as not to turn the great Assamese dream into a nightmare. ULFA too has a stake in AGP unity

for they hope to impose candidates of their choice on the party's list or put them up as independents and demand AGP support. This way they can not only present a formidable electoral front against the other parties but also have a reserve force of ulfa sympathisers in the Assembly.

The renewal of separatist statements especially by the AGP(R) will only help push the party closer to ULFA. The AGP(R) has significantly started talking about the 1978 Mangaldoi resolution in which right to self-determination is mentioned and last fortnight at Dibrugarh their leaders decided to demand full autonomy including control over natural resources. An earlier statement by Mahanta along these lines had caused a flutter in the National Front which has now decided to keep both the factions out.

Even as the debate about the viability of elections in Assam and the resultant confusion created a crisis situation, it is evident that the Government has taken a calculated risk in the anticipation of a peace dividend.

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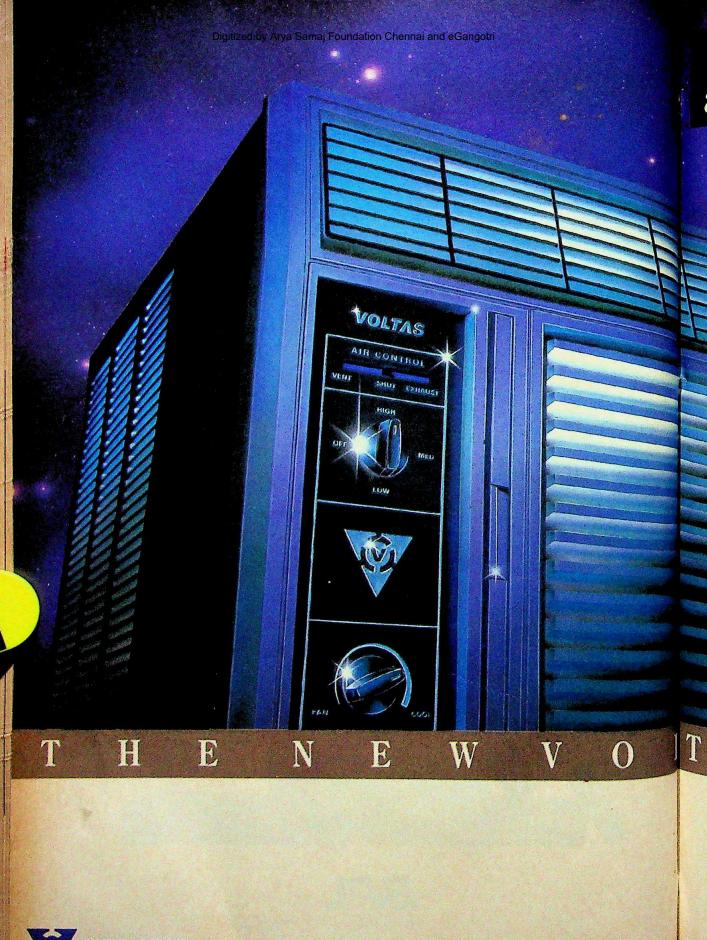
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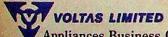
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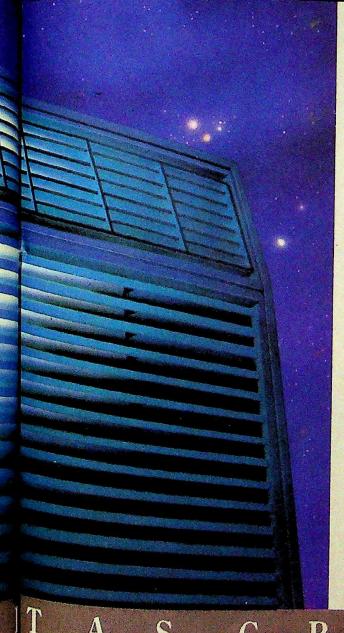






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# A Floating Vote Bank

With the Congress(I) having lost its monopoly over the Harijans, their electoral stance in the coming polls has acquired crucial importance.

By BHASKAR ROY in Mhow and Delhi

HEY brought marigolds, incense sticks and candles. Men, women and children-tired from their overnight journey from the four corners of the country-touched the ground reverentially. They were paying homage at the birthplace of their 20thcentury deity-Dr B.R. Ambedkar. For the thousands of Dalits who converged on Mhow in Madhya Pradesh, Ambedkar's elevation to semi-divine status is just one strand in their search for a coherent identity.

Another line of people, less salubrious and less genuine, also weaved its way to Mhow: politicians hungry for votes. Despite being in the throes of electioneering, they made a point of trekking to Mhow to display ostentatiously their admiration for the Dalit hero. All the top guns who went-Rajiv Gandhi, Atal Behari Vajpayee, Kanshi Ram-knew such a journey was neces-

sary to woo the Harijan vote. This vote, if cast as a block, can decide the outcome of the 10th general election. Apart from the 79 reserved seats, the Scheduled Castes form 17 percent of the population. In short, their votes are a decisive factor in a large number of constituencies.

Once considered a safe part of the Congress votebank, Harijans in recent years have shown signs of disaffection with party. The 1989 general election was historic. For first time, Congress(I)'s iron grip over the Harijans was broken. The BJP-Janata Dal electoral alliance bagged

(Clockwise from right) Harijans throng Ambedkar's birthplace; Kanshi Ram leads BSP rally; Paswan with supporters: desperate battle

more reserved seats Congress(I). The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) of Kanshi Ram, which claims to uphold Ambedkar's political legacy, won three seats.

There was no doubting the sea change in Harijan politics. Their votes were up for grabs with no single party able to claim a monopoly or take them

for granted. Says Janata Dal leader Ram Vilas Paswan: "The Harijans are now politically more aware and keen to assert themselves. They want to come out of the Congress(I)'s clutches.'

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The new generation of educated Harijan youths cherish higher aspirations than their parents. But the sad reality for the poorest among them, such

as farm labourers, is that their lives grind on unchanged. The news that Paswan and Kanshi Ram held mammoth Dalit rallies recently in Delhi simply passed them by. Most politicians inspire them with nothing but disgust. For many, the Congress(1) is still a safe haven. a question of the devil you know being better than the devil you don't. Says Hindu Singh of Talauli village near Indore: "We are toopoortotakeaninterest in politics. Governments have come and gone but our fate has not changed. will vote for the Congress because that is what we have always done."



#### CONGRESS(I)

- An SC/ST Commission to have statutory powers
- The building of a Rs 110-crore Dr Ambedkar University
- Liberal loans for SC/STs setting up small businesses

#### JANATA DAL

- Plan allocation for Harijan welfare
- Legislation for filling the backlog of job reservations

#### BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

- Scheme for providing dwellings to Harijans free of cost
- Anti-untouchability law to be enforced
- Free legal aid for the SCs
- Palam airport to be named after Dr Ambedkar

#### JANATA DAL(S)

- **Educational facilities for Harijans**
- Effective measures to fill in government jobs



A few kilometres away, Lal Singh of Niranjanpur echoes the same cynicism: "The only thing we get from the leaders is good booze on poll-eve." However, those who are in service and comparatively well-heeled are less fatalistic. M.S. Dambare, a government employee from Nagpur who came to Mhow for the BSP rally, squarely blames Jagjivan Ramcommonly perceived to have opposed Ambedkar-for the "backwardness of Harijans". The Congress, he says, has only exploited the ignorance of the Dalits in its pursuit of their votes.

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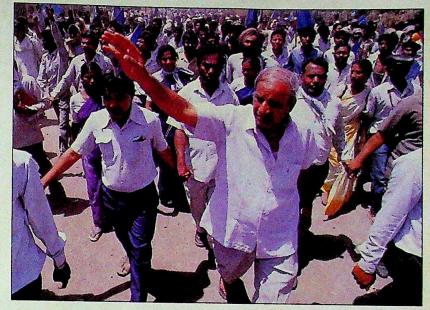
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The Congress(I)'s monopoly on the Harijan vote has meant their vote has been uniform across the country, with no north-south divide. Paswan claims that the current upsurge of Harijan support for the Janata Dal is also an all-India phenomenon. Kanshi Ram disagrees. His theory about the block Hari-Jan vote is unusual. Says he: "It is Possible to consolidate the Harijan vote but that will not suit my purpose. If the Harijans overwhelmingly vote for the 8sp it might alienate the other components of the Bahujan Samaj like Muslims and backwards. I am trying to unite all these social groups."

Bluster apart, this statement points to the possibility of a new social realign-





ment in the post-Mandal situation. What V.P. Singh has attempted through the promotion of the Mandal report is the consolidation of the lower strata of Indian society. In search of a new constituency, he wanted to unite the minorities, Harijans and backwards under the same banner.

NTERESTINGLY, though, the challenge to this move came not from the L Congress(I) but the BJP. The Ayodhya movement spearheaded by the BJP has also been aimed at using the symbol of Ram to unify a badly-fragmented Hindu community. Its success will mean the BJP's failure. It's Ram or Mandal. BJP ideologues, however, do not even accept

that the Ram movement has an upper caste bias. Says K.R. Malkani, BJP vicepresident: "Many of those killed in Ayodhya were Harijans. Our movement is a great bridge builder."

The sociological aspect of these two movements has rather been lost sight of because of their strong political message. Looked at in their proper perspective, two segments of Hindu society seem to be at war with each other. The Dalits, who trace their ancestry to the legendary poet, Valmiki, are entering into a power struggle with the proponents of the Ram movement. With odd reasoning, Kanshi Ram predicts the fall of the Ram bhakts. Says he: "We Harijans have 'Ram' either as suffix or a



Meira Kumar with Harijan supporters: lagging behind

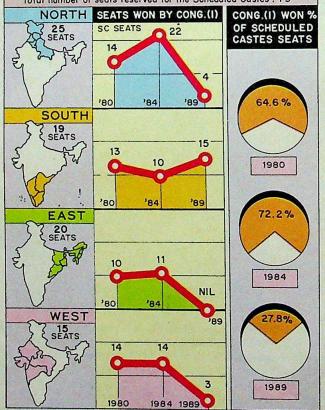
prefix to our names-Kanshi Ram, Ram Vilas, Ram Dhan. The Harijans had to pay dearly for their Ram bhakti. It is good that Lal Krishna Advani, Atal Behari Vajpayee, Murli Manohar Joshi, all those who do not have 'Ram' in their names, have become Ram disciples. Certainly they will very soon meet the same fate as the Harijans."

This is the long-term view. The immediate worry for the political parties is how the Harijans will vote this month. The Congress(I) can no longer win 70 per cent of the reserved Scheduled Caste seats as it did in the past (with the exception of 1977). It lost 70 seats in 1989 because of the presence of the BSP in the field. Admits Arjun Singh, Madhya Pradesh Congress(I) chief: "In several constituencies in the state the BSP will cut into our votes.'

The Janata Dal leaders hope that their message of

social justice will attract a large number of Harijan votes. The BJP has given tickets to prominent Harijan personalities in different fields. Satdev Arva, a well-known Harijan social worker, is being fielded from Nawadh in Bihar. The party has also recently admitted eminent Harijan personalities such as Naresh Karodi in Gujarat and P.G. Gavai in Maharashtra in order to attract the Harijan vote. The welfare

Chart by B.K. SHARMA PATTERN OF HARIJAN VOTES: GROWING DISENCHANTMENT WITH CONGRESS (1) Total number of seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes: 79



measures for the Harijans in the three BJP-ruled states are expected to have won the party their lasting affection. Says party General Secretary Govindacharya: "The work of the RSS and BIP workers among the Harijans has created a fund of goodwill.'

As for the Congress(I), it tends to believe that Rajiv Gandhi alone can bring the estranged Harijans back into the party fold. Although Meira

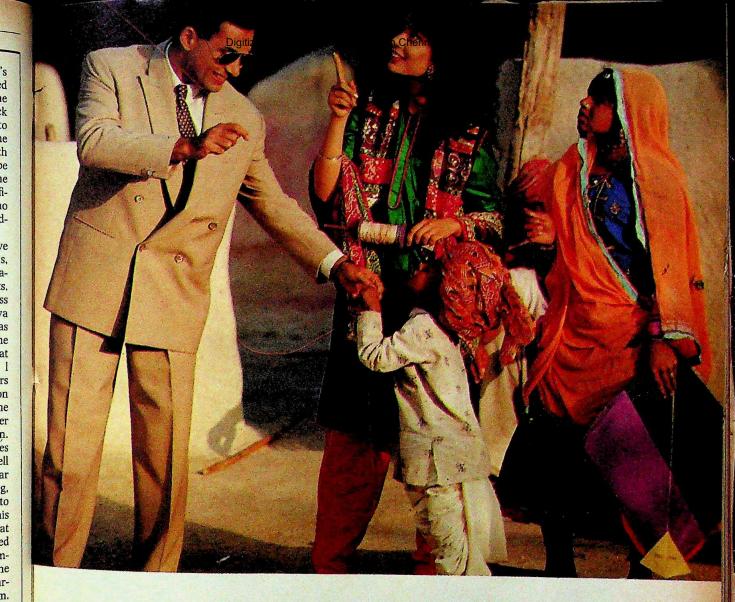
Kumar, Jagjivan Ram's daughter, was appointed general secretary of the party a few months back in an apparent attempt to win the Harijan vote, she has been too busy with organisational work to be able to campaign in the Harijan belts. So, significantly, it was Rajiv who went to Mhow on Ambedkar's birth centenary.

Determined to prove its hold over the Harijans, the BIP is contesting a majority of the reserved seats. In an attempt to impress the Dalits, the Madhya Pradesh Government has decided to build the Ambedkar memorial at Mhow at a cost of Rs l crore. How far it alters the general perception among Harijans that the BIP is a bastion of the upper castes remains to be seen.

Kanshi Ram hopes that his party will fare well in both Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. He's expecting. rather optimistically, to increase the number of his seats tenfold. The fact that he is a force to be reckoned with in both states is amply demonstrated by the eagerness of the other parties to align with him. Both Mulayam Singh Yadav and Simranjit Singh Mann are keen to get the BSP as an ally. Kanshi Ram's current boastis: "I am working for another hung Parliament. I will use my votes to ensure that."

Con-Though the gress(I) share of the Harijan vote is likely to decline further, it will still win the Scheduled Caste seats in the states where the

Janata Dal and BSP are weak. But whichever way the Harijan vote goes. the May general election will mark the collapse of yet another political certainty. No one is sure what will emerge from the shifting sands of caste politics in the post-Mandal era. The fear of the unknown haunts everyone, except Harijans themselves who hope that when the sands have settled, their future will be brighter.



IT WAS MY ENTIRE WORLD,
UNTIL THERE WAS YOU.
THE KITE DRIFTED WITH MY THOUGHTS.
I'D WATCH YOU, AND DREAM
WE'D GROW UP, MARRY...
TODAY MY HEART SOARS.
THERE ARE NO KITES TO CUT.
IS THIS STILL A DREAM?

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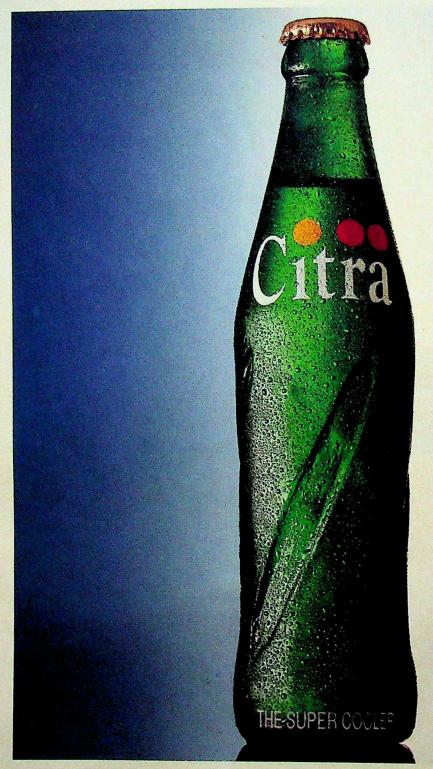
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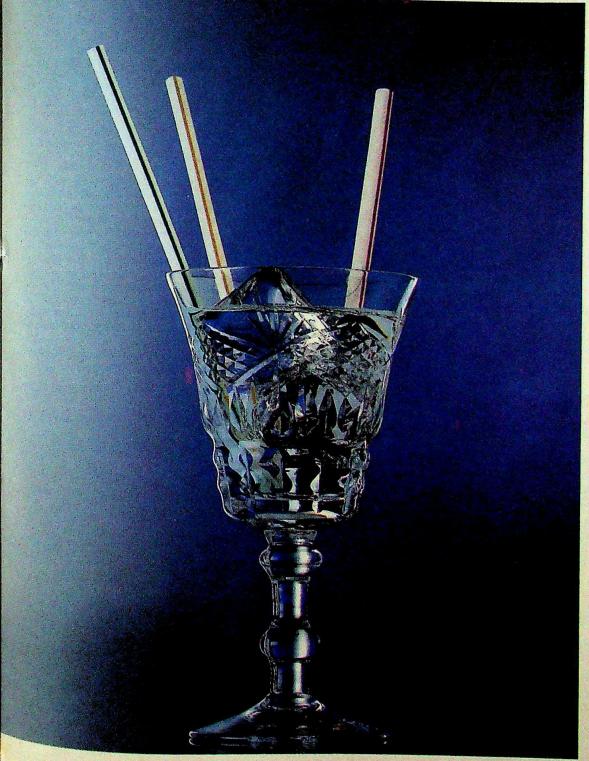


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# HAZIRA The Pangs of Growth

Hazira in South Gujarat is at the hub of petrochemicals activity. But serious doubts have surfaced about how much more development can take place there.



By M. RAHMAN

ARELY six years ago, Hazira was a bleak, marshy peninsula at the mouth of the historic Gulf of Cambay. Today it bids fair to become the hub of India's petrochemical and fertiliser sector, with nearly Rs 5,000 crore already invested in major public, private and cooperative sector projects along its shoreline. But even as work continues apace on the latest venture—the mammoth Rs 3,500-crore Reliance Petrochemicals Ltd (RPL) complex-Hazira's transformation from a barren outpost to a modern industrial centre now appears irretrievably retarded.

Five years after the Hazira Area Development Authority (HADA) was constituted, its growth plans aren't yet ready. Little wonder then, the roads are cratered, a crucial link bridge is still incomplete after nine years of work, the telephone system hardly works, schools, hospitals and industrial training centres are non-existent and industries have been threatened with a water supply cut-off after 1992. A town

with just 30,000 people when the investment binge started in the mid-'80s is now up in arms against further development. Says local MLA, Bagubhai Patel: "What we want now is an end to land acquisition (for new projects) and investment of at least Rs 10 crore by the industries in facilities for the local people."

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The big money started pouring into Hazira soon after the Government decided that it would be the best landfall point for carting gas, mainly from the Oil and Natural Gas Commission's (ONGC)

#### MAJOR PROJECTS OF OVER RS 5,000 CRORE HAVE COME UP IN HAZIRA...



ONGC complex at Hazira

- ONGC has a Rs 600crore offshore gas processing complex.
- **KRIBHCO** has a Rs 900-crore fertiliser complex.

- NTPC is setting up a modern Rs 1,025crore power station.
- Rs 3,500-crore Reliance petrochem project is coming up.



KRIBHCO's fertiliser project



Essar's sponge iron unit

- **Essar Guiarat has** commissioned a Rs 360crore sponge iron unit.
- Over Rs 400 crore smaller projects are also in operation.

south Bassein offshore fields, to the hinterland in the north through the Hazira-Bijaipur-Jagdishpur (нвј) pipeline. There were good reasons for choosing Hazira as the best location from which to process and pump 20 million cubic metres of gas northwards every day for six fertiliser and three thermal plants located along the HBJ pipeline maintained by the Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL).

It was also regarded as an ideal area for putting up large industrial complexes for which the gas could provide both power and feedstock. There was no shortage of water, vast tracts of marshy land seemed available, and commercial centre Surat was a bare 20 km away with good rail and road links. The river Tapi provided a natural waterway for transporting oversized equipment to and from the industrial plants and, it was felt, a port could also be developed to directly export Hazira's products.

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Most importantly, Hazira was located bang in the middle of the Vadodara-Vapi axis in south Gujarat. Starting from 1973, when the public sector Indian Petrochemical Corporation Limited got going, this belt has developed into the chemical and petrochemical capital of India, accounting for almost a quarter of the country's petrochemical

projects (25 out of 107). "From Vadodara to Vapi, nearly Rs 20,000 crore will be invested in this sector," says Kamal Nanavaty, RPL's vice-president (marketing).

NCE the submarine pipeline brought gas to Hazira, the Rs 900-crore fertiliser plant of the Krishak Bharati Cooperative (клівнсо) was the first to start commercial production in March 1986. In the next two years, Larsen and Toubro's (L&T) Rs 90crore heavy engineering unit and oNGC's Rs 600-crore gas processing complex . became fully functional. Since then, Essar Gujarat has commissioned its Rs 360-crorespongeiron plant in March 1990, and announced plans for a Rs 1,500-crore hot rolled steel export unit. KRIBHCO itself has expanded its operations by erecting a Rs 225-crore heavy water plant for the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), Indian Oil has put up a cooking gas bottling plant while GAIL has a gas compressor station.

Two of the most ambitious of the regional projects coming up are the National Thermal Power Corporation's Rs 1,026-crore, 645 mw gas-based Kawas power plant and the Reliance group's Rs 3,500-crore integrated petrochemical complex, which includes a gas cracker plant and the Rs 1,200crore RPL downstream projects to make commodity plastics.

But the original idea of creating a modern residential, commercial and industrial settlement combining large and small units now appears only a mirage. The Hazira plan ran into trouble soon after the first draft was published in August 1989. Incredibly, the plan envisaged the dislocation of virtually all the villagers in the area. When the cry of 'HADA Hatao, Hazira Bachao' spread through the villages, the authorities were deluged with more than 4,000 objections to further development. "We hope to sort out the problems in three months and make the plan public," says Gujarat Chief Secretary H.K. Khan.

It seems like the Government has decided to drastically modify the plan by disallowing the entry of any new major industry and altogether scrapping the proposal for locating the Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation's (GIDC) zones for smaller downstream and ancillary industries in the HADA area. Smaller plastic, chemical and ancillary units will now be located only in areas closer to Surat city.

At the very heart of the failure of the Hazira plan lies a bureaucratic incongruity-while HADA has been

### ...BUT BIG PROBLEMS LOOM, AND THE INFRASTRUCTURE IS CREAKING.



The incomplete Tapi bridge

- Crucial Tapi bridge is still incomplete after nine years.
- Roads links are primitive, and rail links are distant.

- Industry has been asked to pay for water pipelines and roads.
- No schools. hospitals or industrial training institutes have come up.



Reliance built its own jetty



**HADA** chief Vinay Vyasa

- Local opposition is building up against further development.
- Hazira's plan of development is not ready even after five years.

conferred the responsibility of planning for the region, GIDC is the nodal agency for its development. Besides, HADA has had a niggardly Rs 3 lakh annual budget, hardly any staff, and the already hardpressed Surat municipal commissioner doubles as its part-time chairman. It has no one from industry on its board, while representatives of the local people were inducted hardly a year ago. The Government has now decided to appoint a senior IAS officer as head of HADA, but the change will come too late since once the plan is passed. the agency will tend to become redundant.

Worse, the bridge across the Tapi, under construction for the last nine years, is still incomplete. The bridge will link the big industrial complexes to Magdalla port, the national highway to Bom-

bay, and Surat's airport and southern suburbs, where once, L&T and other companies are constructing housing colonies for their employees. As a result,



"Industries should not be expected to contribute for basic things—railway, roads, water, drainage, telephones."

RATAN LAL, General Manager, ONGC

the main link to Hazira is still a narrow, potholed state highway woefully inadequate for the area's heavy truck traffic.

Apart from the roads, the telephone

connections through Surat city are primitive, and both кківнсо and ongchave established their own microwave communications to link up with the outside world. Water for the thirsty continuous process industries is at present supplied from the Kakrapar irrigation canal. but thanks to waterlogging in the area, the Government has decided to keep the canal dry during the monsoons after 1992. The GIDC is supposed to acquire land and lay a water pipeline for industry, and it is now asking the five major units to share its cost.

'Water is a crucial requirement for a petrochemical complex and we cannot redirect resources at this stage for a pipeline. The expectation five years ago was different-the Government was to provide for the infrastructure," says an RPL

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director. Adds ongc General Manager Ratan Lal: "Industries should not be expected to contribute for basic things like railway, roads and water." The



state Government, however, has virtually served an ultimatum: pay up for everything from water connections to roads, or else carry on with whatever is available.

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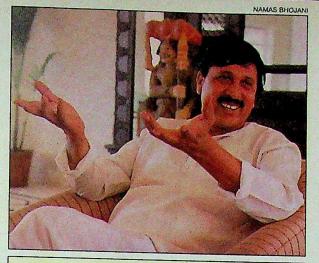
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VEN land, of which there seemed no shortage in Hazira earlier, is difficult to come by. What used to sell for Rs 10,000 an acre now fetches more than Rs 3 lakh. the price Essar paid in a hurry for each of the 200 acres it requires for its hot rolled steel unit. KRIBHCO had to spend eight years in litigation before it officially acquired land for the pae housing colony, and now faces a growing demand from villagers for more money for the land it has already purchased.

As the region's pioneer, KRIBHCO had of necessity created its own infrastructure. It has its own water pipeline, a

28-km rail link to the main line and a railway siding, a large jetty designated as a 'minor port', schools, a residential township for employees and



"We want an end to land acquisition and an investment of at least Rs 10 crore in facilities for the local people."

BAGUBHAI PATEL, BJP, MLA

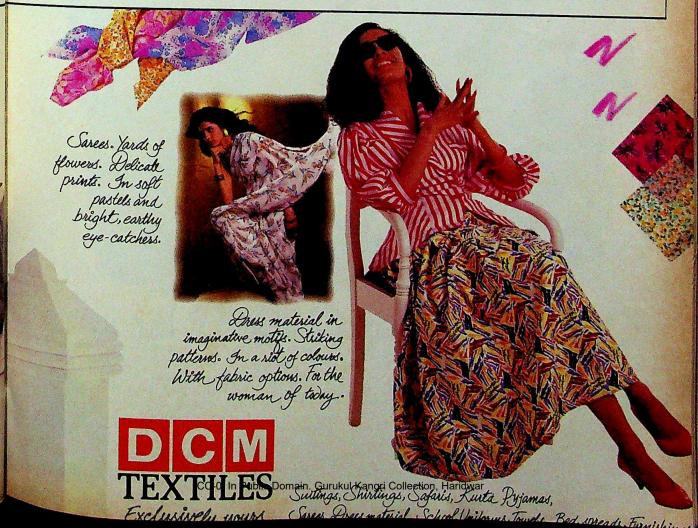
is developing a public park, zoo and a multi-religious centre.

L&T, which manufactures massive 800-tonne equipment for nuclear reac-

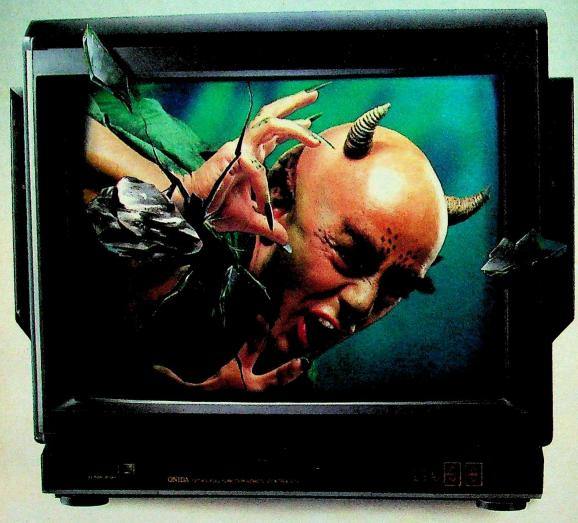
tors, space research and oil exploration programmes, as also Reliance, which is shipping imported ethylene for its downstream plants till the cracker is ready, have also constructed their own jetties. The Gujarat Maritime Board has made little progress in desilting the Tapi's navigable channel, so only 2,000 tonne barges can come upriver. In any case, the ambitious plan to develop Hazira as a major port has for long been sacrificed in favour of developing Nhava Sheva port across the harbour from Bombay.

In the prologue to Hazira's draft development plan, the author waxes eloquent as to how the area derives its name from the mausoleum of an English officer. The dilapidated 17th century structure is now beyond restoration. If the modern industrial complex now

taking shape in Hazira is not to meet the same fate, the Government must give priority to creating at least the basic infrastructure.



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Don't just envy the ONIDATV. Buy it.

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#### LAB LOBBYING

OW to produce an innocuous raw material used to produce synthetic detergents—linear alkyl benzene (IAB)—is the subject of intense lobbying. Two years ago, Nirma, Hindustan Lever and Straw Products (JK Singhania group) were issued letters of intent to set up three new LAB projects, each costing about Rs 200 crore. The main input for LAB is N-paraffin, extracted from kerosene.

The existing producers of LAB had been allowed to extract N-paraffin from kerosene. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas then decided that the national oil companies would do the extraction themselves and sell N-paraffin to the new LAB manufacturers. This decision united even arch-rivals Nirma and Hindustan Lever, since both see the possibility of extracting some additional profits while drawing Nparaffin from kerosene. But the Government refuses to budge. It has also denied Nirma permission to shift its LAB unit from Visakhapatnam to Gujarat.

#### HEAD OVER HEART

RE non-resident Indians special people willing to put their money where their heart is rather than what their head dictates? Think again. The Hindujas' Indian flagship, truck-and-bus maker Ashok Leyland, has proposed a convertible debenture scheme that works more to the advantage of its non-resident shareholders than the rest. An Ashok Leyland rights issue of bonds slated some time in the next two months proposes that domestic shareholders be allotted partially convertible debentures of Rs 200 each, Rs 90 of which will be converted into two equity shares. The remaining Rs 110 will stay locked up for seven years at a 12.5 per cent interest rate. But the Hindujas themselves will not be required to subscribe to the nonconvertible portion of the issue. Unless the financial institutions (which hold 40 per cent versus the 38 per cent of the Hinduja-Iveco combine) refuse to play ball, the proposal to allot equity to them should sail through at the company's extraordinary general meeting on May 3.

#### SECOND ENTRY

HE Tatas have already got one foot into the shoe export door through Tata Exports; now they are getting in the other with their Taj hotels group kicking off an export unit. The latter has set up a new subsidiary called Taj Rhein Shoes which has tied up a technical collaboration with Sohlen Fabrikation GmbH of Germany for exporting shoes to the US, Britain, Ireland and Holland apart from Germany.

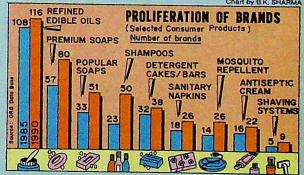
#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE sunrise sector of processed foods continues to beckon, never mind the failures. The recent past has seen Brooke Bond get into spices and buy over Vijay Mallya's jams and ketchup business; sm Dyechem has agreed to take over Britannia's soya foods division; Lipton, despite its sour performance with tetrapacked drinks, is eyeing ice-creams; and Nestle plans to launch soya products and beverages. The new hopeful is the Rs 100-crore Bombay Oil group, which is buying up Pune-based str. Ltd, a mayonnaise, soups and ketchup company with a Rs 2-crore turnover. SIL is to be merged with Kanmoor Foods, a Bombay Oil subsidiary, and lots of new products are in the works. Bombay Oil is also looking at branded spices, as subsidiary Marico readies a non-stick cooking oil for national launch.

#### MORE THE MERRIER

HE second half of the '80s have seen dramatic change in India's marketing arena, with humble commodities being converted into brands. A recent study by the Operations Research Group on brand proliferation brings out this fact clearly. Thus where there were just 23

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



branded shampoos in 1985, by 1990 the figure had more than doubled to 50. The other major product segments where new brands emerged fast were: mosquito repellents (14 in 1985 to 26 in 1990), sanitary napkins (18 to 26) and premuim soaps (57 to 80).

#### **TOWARDS COMPROMISE**

OR some years now, a number of pharmaceutical companies have been engaged in a running battle with the Government over the alleged over-pricing of their products. The Government claims these companies owe it over Rs 150 crore—the largest amounts being claimed from two multinational firms, Hoechst (over Rs 75 crore) and Glaxo (around Rs 50 crore)—as per the provisions of the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 1979. The companies, of course, have refuted the Government's claims and many chose to fight it out in different courts of law. Last month, however, some of these drug companies changed tack and suggested going in for arbitration to settle the disputes. But thus far, the Government has steadfastly refused, believing it is on a strong wicket. Senior bureaucrats claim that the very fact that the companies now want arbitration implies that their arguments may not wash in court. The companies disagree and contend that they are merely trying to avoid hassles. The cigarette companies, which are also facing huge excise claims, are watching the drug tussle with more than a passing interest.

At 19, I'd had my share of teenage fun. Naightzeastignessa Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri get serious.



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The Apple student just cannot stay in one place.

APPLE INDUSTRIES LIMITED. APPLE CENTRES: Ahmedahad Bombhy Tel 256574 (Forth 6885878 Mahad) 6993466 (Santa Grual Mal 22915 (Ghatkopar) Bangalore Tel: 568161 Bandul Con 381 (Forth 6885878 Mahad) 6993466 (Santa Grual Mal 22915 (Ghatkopar) Bangalore Tel: 568161 Bandul Con 381 (Forth 6885878 Mahad) 6993466 (Santa Grual Mal 22915 (Ghatkopar) Bangalore Tel: 568161 Bandul Con 381 (Forth 6885878) Bandul Con 3

This is how I looked on my interview day. Pretty neat, bub? Can't believe I'm not wearing jeans!

> Guess whom I got married to? Another computer nut. Anjali's the one on the left. What do two Systems Analysts do in their free time?

My first day at work and I've already impressed the boss. Mini says she has never seen him smiling like this.



Start life with an advantage.

PAKISTAN

# Open for Business

### The Government has opted for sweeping liberalisation

T is difficult to guess who was more responsible for Pakistan's bold step into the brave, new world of economic privatisation, deregulation and denationalisation. It could have been the World Bank, or more likely, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharief wearing his other hat as one of the country's preeminent industrialists. But what is undeniable is the clear economic signal he is sending: Pakistan is open to business.

That's more than can be said about India's government and politicians, caught as they are in pre-electoral waffle. The Congress(I), despite the alleged radicalism of its manifesto, still steers clear of uttering the dreaded P-word: privatisation. All it talks about is "the

gradual withdrawal of the public sector from areas where the private and joint sectors have developed capabilities". This looks almost as timid as the proposal put up by the caretaker Chandra Shekhar Government to unload 20 per cent of the equity in certain public sector units to public sector mutual funds.

Pakistan's government has, on the other hand, stolen a march over India's fainthearts. It has aldenationready the large Muslim Commercial Bank (мсв) and the smaller Allied Bank will be next. Both came under the Government's in 1974. These are to be followed by the United Bank Ltd ultimately, and.

the enormous Habib Bank, besides major financial institutions.

Three other public sector organisations losing a lot of money are up for sale: the Cotton Export Corporation, the Rice Export Corporation and the Trading Corporation of Pakistan. Forty-five more will be auctioned soon and the ultimate total could be 115 candidates for privatisation. Meanwhile, 16 parties are queuing up to set up a privately-owned airline in competition to the hitherto monopolistic Pakistan International Airways.

Contrast that with India. While the states have managed a degree of privatisation, at the Central level not one single initiative has got past the consideration stage. The Rajiv Gandhi government's efforts to sell Scooters India to Bajaj Auto died an unsung death; current efforts to privatise Air India subsidiary Hotel Corporation are in limbo. The open skies policy—with air taxies being given the take-off signal—has been a slow starter given the

in-built restrictions in the policy which makes it virtually impossible for aspirants to import aircraft. Apart from the fact that no foreign exchange is made available, import duties even on aircraft bought by non-resident Indians is a high 15 per cent (vs 3 per cent for Air India).

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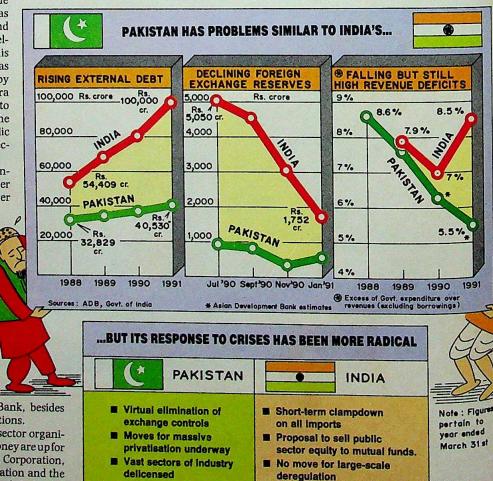
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In sharp contrast, Pakistan has broken with its regulatory past most dramatically. On the foreign exchange front, almost all controls are off. Barring defence, it has opened up its economy for foreign investment. More important, all Pakistanis can have local foreign exchange accounts with no questions asked. Though not explicitly stated, they are also in a position to liquidate their local assets, convert them into foreign



Charl by BK SHARMA

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But there's been no depletion of foreign exchange reserves ever since the new rules went into effect giving the lie to the bureaucratic belief that the best way to tackle a foreign exchange crunch is to limit Indians' access to it: for that is the message the RBI is beaming by clamping down on importers.

In a basic sense, India and Pakistan have been victims of a similar set of ruinous policies. In the Bhutto and Indira Gandhi years, the governments nationalised large sectors of private industry, introduced stringent measures to regulate foreign investment, and generally set about creating a licence raj. The result: both borrowed hard from abroadinstead of inviting foreign investment; both spent more at home than what they earned as tax revenue. In Pakistan, the fiscal deficit (which is the excess of government expenditure over revenue, excluding borrowing) peaked at 8.6 per cent of gross domestic product in the year to March 1988 before the International Monetary Fund (IMF)

stepped in with stern advise to trim spending and raise more tax revenue. In India, the year to March 31, 1991 saw the deficit soaring to 8.5 per cent; the next year should see some correction, not least because the Government is back, cap in hand, before the IMF for a loan.

If future profligacy can be kept in check, privatisation could help the Government make ends in the short run meet by bringing money to the exchequer's coffers. In Pakistan, the Government expects to rake Rs 5,000 crore (Indian Rs 4.390 crore) in just one year. And industry is certainly happy since in Nawaz Sharief it has a prime minister who, as owner of the prospering Ittefaq Industries, is thoroughly conversant with the drags imposed by an overweening government.

Nawaz Sharief's boldest step, the freeing of foreign exchange controls, is in reality an acknowledgement of the futility of such measures. The effective exchange

rate of the Pakistani rupee was set even earlier by the unofficial market in Dubai, with all transactions being done there. Some years ago, the country took a big step forward by allowing Pakistanis to buy Foreign Exchange Bearer Certificates locally in rupees, on which the premium ranged from 7-10 per cent. Though it was used for clandestine hawala transactions, there was no large scale run on foreign exchange reserves. In fact, there was an inflow of money.

HE measure worked its way into the economy without creating ripples, and made the Pakistani rupee largely convertible. Now these same transactions are being done on the local stock-market. Since there is a tax-free 15 per cent rate of interest on these holdings, it becomes attractive to keep the money in the country.

In banking, the area where the first liberalisation efforts have been focussed, few people doubt that efficiency will improve. "The objective of privatisation is to infuse competition among banks," says Hussian Dalwai, president of the newly-privatised MCB. "Now there is none. Ninety per cent of customer deposits, 88 per cent of advances, and 70 per cent of import-export remittances are with the nationalised banks. Competition will provide better returns to the depositor, better pricing for advances, and improve customer service."

Having acquired 26 per cent of the Muslim Commercial Bank's of shares at Rs 56 (one Pakistani rupee equals 87 Indian paise) for Rs 83 crore, the National Group that Dalwai works for has underwritten a further 25 per centwhich is being offered to the public. Dalwai wants to make MCB, currently with total deposits of Rs 27 billion, Pakistan's largest bank in five years.

But there are nevertheless misgivings about the rapid pace of privatisation, especially among the unions. "We will put up forceful resistance to privatisation," says Mohammed Yakub, chairman of the supreme council of 11 federations of taken-over industries. The Government, however, is in no

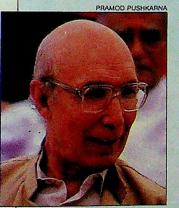
mood to back off. "The unions have a legitimate role, but the interest of the staff is subservient to the interests of the institutions (they work in)," says Finance Minister Sartaj Aziz. "If an institution is going down the drain, how can the interest of the staff be protected?"

While the deregulatory measures find few antagonists among economists, some have doubts about the pace of reform. "Are we ready for this kind of privatisation hurricane?" asks Sultan Ahmed, an economic analyst. "In Britain. Thatcher, the militant evangelist of privatisation, took 11 years to offer the shares of 19 major enterprises (to the public). But we want to sell 115 enterprises in one year."

But if one were to look at the results of the Indian model of liberalisation by creep—two steps forward, one step backward—over the second half of the '80s, haste may not necessarily be a bad thing.

—ARUN CHACKO in Pakistan with ZAHID HUSSAIN

When the Government enters into areas which it cannot run well, things do



not work well.
This is partly
because without
incentives for
profit or reward
there is a
total lack of
dynamism."

SARTAJ AZIZ Pakistan's Finance Minister

#### **PAKISTAN'S POLICY HIGHLIGHTS**

- The private sector can set up banks, build toll roads, and run airlines.
- Licensing has been completely abolished, except in the defence sector.
- Five-year tax holiday for new units; no licensing for capital goods imports.
- Any Pakistani citizen can start and operate a foreign exchange account.



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DISH ANTENNAE

## Sudden Slump

#### But the picture is still rosy

ADDAM Hussain may not have enjoyed George Bush's war, but India's fledgling dish antenna manufacturers sure did. But now that the war's over, a gulf has opened up between supply and demand since Cable News Network (CNN) no longer looks as hot as it did when the guns were booming. Sales of the C-band dish antenna have begun to cool off for most manufacturers. Says Sudhir Damo-

daran, director of Delhi-based Catvision Products: "Our sales have fallen by 50 per cent from (the war's) boom levels." Rajeev Mehrotra, managing director of Shyam Antenna Electronic Limited, has seen an even more drastic fall. "Sales have trickled down to 25 per cent of the Gulf war days.

But no one's really complaining. Reason: though the CNN effect has waned, sales are plateauing at levels higher than what prevailed before the war. Catvision, which saw sales of antennae zooming to 100-amonth from pre-war figures of 30 or so, still manages to sell 55a-month. Shyam Antenna boosted sales tenfold to 100-amonth before settling at 25. MC Engineering, another Delhibased antenna maker, is even claiming that its 100-a-month war demand has not cooled one bit.

For this, everybody has the growth of cable television networks in the country to thank. From just around 100 cable networks in 1985, the number has multiplied at least fortyfold over the past five years. "We're going to have another boom soon," predicts Damodaran. And fuelling it this time will be not CNN, but the news and entertainment bonanza that may be beamed from September through seven channels of the AsiaSat sent up by a Hongkong combine. A trial channel has already been kicked off in April. Says S.S. Puri, a Shyam Antenna director: "The quantum of business is going to pick up once AsiaSat becomes operational, but nobody can say by how much." The BBC World Television Series may also beam its programmes through AsiaSat.

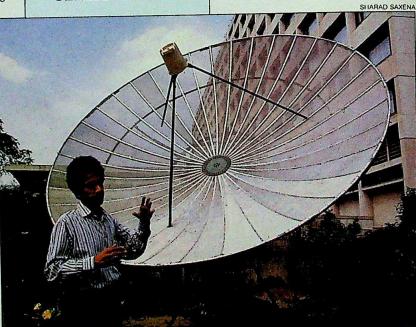
Antennae companies are readying

themselves for the big grab. To boost sales volumes, they are trying to reduce dish sizes and costs. To catch Cband programmes disseminated by AsiaSat, dish antennas of 8 to 10 ft diameter will be sufficient whereas the weak signals of CNN needed 16-ft dishes. If the AsiaSat programmes catch Indians' fancy, smaller dishes will mean smaller price tags for antennae. Currently, the average price of a Cband dish, including installation costs, ranges from Rs 1.5 lakh to Rs 1.75 lakh. "Until both size and price come down, demand will not jump," says MC

Damodaran and his dish

pieces of the 16-ft kind and 25,000 of the 8-ft category annually. Shyam has in-built capacity to make 20,000 sets annually, including S-band dishes. MC Engineering recently set up a unit at Sahibabad, Uttar Pradesh, to expand its total output to 6,000 small size and 1,200 16-ft C-band antennae.

Reducing prices and sizes will not be enough. Manufacturers, therefore, are thinking up new ways to push sales. Mc Engineering has begun offering institutional finance to cable operators to install antennae. Catvision has roped in its cable franchisees to do some selling on its behalf. A recent media splash also tries to project AsiaSat as a Catvision offering, though



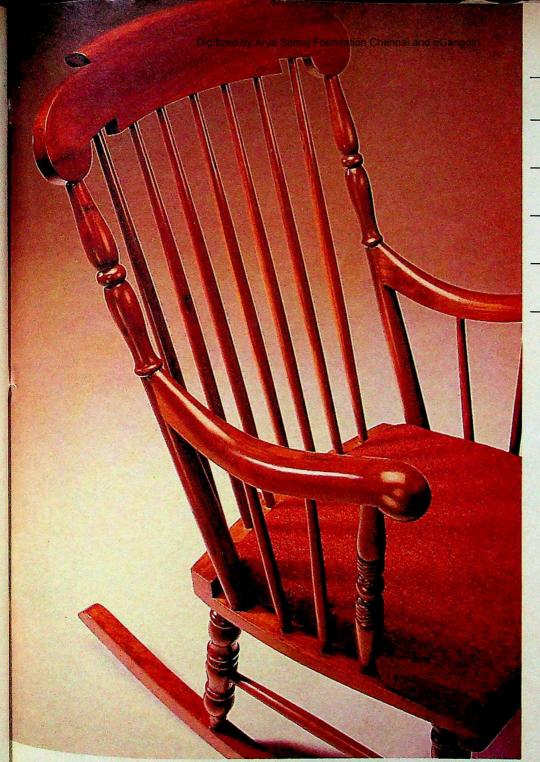
Dealers anticipate another boom as cable networks expand and AsiaSat programmes start taking off.

Engineering's Sharma. Catvision has begun test-marketing 8 to 12 ft antennae in the Rs 55,000-Rs 60,000 price range. Says Damodaran: "Ultimately, we'll try to bring down the size to about 6 ft and the price to Rs 20,000 a piece.'

In anticipation of rising demand, Catvision, which has a production unit in Modinagar, Uttar Pradesh, is setting up a unit each at NOIDA, near Delhi, and in Madras for manufacturing dish antennae. The combined capacity will be for manufacturing around 1,500 the fact remains that anyone who has an antenna can access the programmes. Charges Shyam's Mehrotra: "Catvision is making a fool of people." He made a similar accusation earlier when it claimed sole rights to CNN viewership. Catvision's Damodaran says that the tie-up is real and, in fact. when CNN programmes will be scrambled (encoded) only his subscribers will be able to watch the show.

AsiaSat, on the other hand, will not be going in for the "scrambling" option-at least till it gains viewership. So, for manufacturers of dish antennae and cable systems, AsiaSat promises to be the best marketing tool to flog. While they begin to do that, the question begging an answer is: will the Government turn a blind eye to the prospect of Indians defecting from Doordarshan in droves?

-SRINIVAS VIJAY



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Chart by B.K. SHARMA

ADVERTISING

# Feeling the Squeeze

### As firms slash budgets, advertising agencies suffer

AMAN Rajan's strike rate as managing director of Dattaram Advertising, a middle-rung Bombay-based agency, is going down. Just two years ago, he bagged one out of every two accounts he bid for. Now he just manages one in five and he knows why. "With the larger agencies pitching for smaller company accounts, our success rate has come down," he says.

Success rates are coming down elsewhere too as the Rs 1,300-crore Indian advertising industry slows down after years of frenetic expansion. Says Mike Khanna, chief executive of Hindustan Thompson Associates, the country's largest advertising "For more agency: than three years, we (industry) have had unprecedented

growth in advertising revenue-at 26 per cent every year. No economy can sustain such a boom. It had to slow down."

It has. In 1990-91, growth was down to 18 per cent with industries facing sales drops, which in turn led to the axing of advertising budgets. Even the big spenders are paring down costs. Consumer electronics company Electroniks Weston slashed its advertising expenditure by nearly 50 per cent last year

following a 25-per centfall in sales. The Indana group—which makes instant coffee and milk products among other things-reduced its advertising bills by 70 per cent after production schedules got affected by disturbances in the political atmosphere. Computer organisation DCM Data Products opted for acheaper direct mail campaign to push its machines, thus cutting advertising costs by half. National carrier Air India

trimmed advertisement spending by 10 per cent.

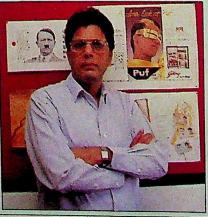
The macro numbers bear this out. The billings of agencies accredited to the Indian Newspaper Society (INS) have grown by a mere 9.35 per cent to Rs 495 crore in 1990 compared to a nippy 21.67 per cent of the previous year. Worse, the actual space for advertising in the print media had declined by more than 7 per cent. Result:

HEMANT PITHWA

recession and political uncertainty forced firms to cut ad expense."

SHAMBHU V. SISTA Managing Director,

NAMAS BHOJANI



Lhe past three years have shown amazing growth. It's got to slow down."

MIKE KHANNA

Chief Executive.

the INS has slapped notices of disaccreditation to as many as 35 advertising agencies. Television hasn't fared much better. Though revenue grew at a moderate 20 per cent to reach Rs 254 crore in the year to March 1991, that rate was partly boosted by a hefty 15 per cent hike in advertisement tariff rates in what was essentially a monop-

Some advertising agencies are cer-

POINTERS TO SLOWDOWN (Growth rate over previous year in %) 30.27 21.67 20.95 190 '89 ADVERTISING Gross billings of INS accredited ad agencies Print media figures pertain to calendar years; sing refers to the fiscal year ending on 31st in the following calendar year

> tainly seeing glum and depressing Bombay-based Sista's has had to reckon with 50-75 per cent budget cuts by its clients in January-March 1991. Says its Managing Director Shambhu V. Sista: "The recession overall and political uncertainty has forced companies manufacturing consumer durables and industrial products to cut down on advertising expenditure." Sista's, which expected to notch up a billing of Rs 20 crore, will now have to be content with a much lower figure. Megacorp, a medium-level Delhi-based agency that had aimed for a promising Rs 6-crore turnover, fell a third short of its target, missing the mark by quite a wide margin.

With the primary capital markets in a tailspin, the financial advertising agencies

have also had to be content with a slower growth rate. Ravindra Singhvi, managing director of Sobhagya Advertising, a specialist in public issue advertising, says very few new companies were launched in the market (in 1990-91) due to the uncertain economic climate, a fall-out of political instability. "So our billings grew by only 15 per cent last year compared to 40 per cent in the earlier years." In



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hvi, Adsue ıpa-(in ecoical by d to We'll deliver. Wherever on earth. **SKYPAK** The worldwide couriers.

Skypak House, Off M. Vassanji Road, Marol, Andheri (E), Bombay 400 059.

Padakcell Village, Gujarat: Where
Saraswatiben's\* simple life continues as easy as ever because of one invisible, invaluable support:



# The National protection

Saraswati, quite an innocent, pretty little lady, married recently.

Little did she know that only two years before the wedding, her husband's family and other farmers in the village had to face an unforeseen problem: cattle disease.

That was the time when a Branch office of National Insurance in Gujarat had quickly come into its rescue. Providing immediate security to the villagers who had National Insurance's cattle insurance policy.

Something that helped create a new sense of security that Saraswati's husband, Rajivbhai, today enjoys with her.

Padakcell village, of course, is but one tiny spot that National Insurance serves in the Western India – through a network of 166 offices with non-traditional coverage like Poultry, Livestock, Kisan Agricultural Pumpset – and traditional as well as tailor-made policies for the industry at large, notably textiles, petrochemicals, shipping and fertilizers.

Today National Insurance's area of operation spans the entire nation. Covered through 16 regional offices, 237 divisional offices, 667 branch offices.

And to top it all, there are 18,000 trained professionals, ready and willing to serve you. To provide that legendary 'National Protection'.



National covers the nation everyday, everywhere, everyway

1990-91, capital raised from the primary markets fell to half the previous year's Rs 4,000 crore-plus levels.

Shrinking budgets and slowing growth are only one aspect of the hard luck story. What really bites is the vicious atmosphere of cut-throat competition among advertising agencies that is chewing up margins. And clients have learned to play one agency against the other, and have even begun to demand clandestine kickbacks. Others expect agencies to do free art work and market research.

Worse, clients often do not pay up in time for services rendered. Last year ins received reports from around 50 agencies alleging non-recovery of dues from clients, a fivefold jump over the year before. Currently some 10 medium and small agencies have nearly Rs 1 crore in dues locked up. Says Sudhir Lal, managing director of Megacorp: "Thanks to political disturbances, companies have not been able to recover dues from their dealers. Add the general credit crunch and companies have a real cash flow problem. The companies, in turn, are slowing down payments to advertising agencies."

Payment delays-one month on an average at Megacorp—have forced the company to borrow money from the market at high interest rates. In the case of Raka Advertising, delays someextend to two-and-a-half months. All this is crushing margins. Three years ago, agencies could safely expect to pocket 3-6 per cent of gross billings as profit. Now they have to be content with a mere 2 per cent.

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Not surprisingly, agencies are in a penny-pinching mood. Trikaya Grey, for instance, decided against fresh investments in new offices and fresh recruits. It is also cutting down on travel and consolidating existing accounts. Raka is trimming down on stationery and telephone bills. Middlerunger Madhyam of Delhi has decided to go slow on servicing accounts where payments look doubtful.

Others like Sobhagya are trying to reduce their overdependence on advertising by diversifying into designing and printing services. It is also planning a thrust into direct mail marketing to bring down dependence on advertising billings to half over the next few years. Madhyam has recently kicked off a video van unit, the operations of which will expand this year.

Clearly, a grow-grow industry is learning to live with the prospect of more down-to-earth growth rates.

SURAJEET DAS GUPTA in Bombay

AIR INDIA

### Soaring Clear

#### Cost saving gambits pay off

OR ensuring profits, insure the right items and ignore the others. Ask the accountants of Air India (AI). They began by muttering darkly about the Gulf crisis, then started talking about weak profits of Rs 15 crore or so and have now displayed a number four times as high for the year to March 1991. Much of that was thanks to financial wizardry on the insurance front: A major chunk of the Rs 60-crore profit came from a decision to scrap and claim insurance



**Gupte:** innovative management

on AI's damaged and elderly Vikramaditya, a Boeing 747 aircraft bought in 1971; another Rs 20 crore was contributed by not insuring AI aircraft flying to the Gulf during the war earlier this year.

AI officials make no bones about the fact that the perky bottom line resulted from innovative financial management. They also defend their preference for scrapping the Vikramaditya. Says Acting Chairman and Managing Director S.R. Gupte: "This was one of the best decisions we took because we did not need the additional capacity in the wake of the Gulf crisis." By convincing the insurers-Lloyds of London—thatit was unviable to repair the airliner, AI was able to recover \$46 million (Rs 85 crore) from them. The balance sheet benefited to the tune of Rs 23 crore in the form of depreciation written back on the scrapped plane.

Almost as large have been the pay-

offs from the Gulf gamble. In the early days of the Kuwait crisis, At officials negotiated a 60-per cent cut in the insurance premium from the original Rs 3 crore per week. When the scudding started, the war insurance soared to Rs 11 crore per week. That's when AI decided, with Union Cabinet sanction, to fly without insurance cover. Since it lost no aircraft, it saved Rs 20 crore.

Lesser gains flowed from other types of financial acrobatics. In the purchase of two Airbus 310s, AI used a novel financial arrangement which involved a French lease and a Japanese leveraged lease to fund the acquisition at a low rate of 7.11 per cent interest instead of the normal rate of 9.5 per cent. The result of this was a whopping

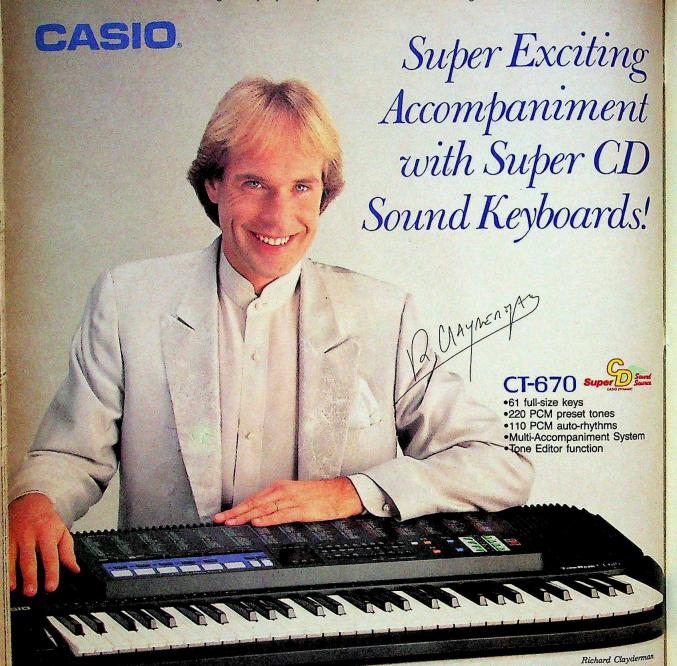
annual saving of \$4 million (Rs 7.6 crore).

Not all the profit, though, can be credited to accountants. AI was also able to improve yields from last year's Rs 8.75 per revenue tonne kilometre (RTKM) to Rs 10.57 RTKM, adding another Rs 20 crore to the bottom line. Other cost-saving gambits-among them. an in-house economy drive, cuts in the advertising budget, and a deferral of expenses earmarked for the image-building exercise-pitched in with Rs 15 crore of savings.

All of that came in useful in a year that saw a sharp rise in fuel costs and loss of markets, added Rs 250 crore to the airline's expenditure. Says Gupte contentedly: "We have done well despite the odds in the worst period of civil aviation history." Quite, for 1990-91's profit figure compares favourably even with the previous year's all-time high of Rs 70 crore, and is a marked improvement over the 1988-89 total of Rs 43 crore.

But the airline's real mettle will be tested this year, when it will have to fight for market share. The world's best carriers are trying to put memories of falling passenger traffic behind them by launching aggressive campaigns to woo travellers. British Airways, for example, flew 50,000 people from all over the world free on April 23-drawing protests from AI. The airline, however, can do little more than protest. There is no insurance against competition.

-W.P.S.SIDHU







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Tokyo, Japan

HOTEL CONSULTANCY

### A Chain Reaction

## Advising entrepreneurs is big business now

When an expatriate Indian businessman from Kabul took over a hotel in New Delhi, he hired professionals to run it. When an entrepreneur in Karnataka diversified into the hotel business, he acquired a franchise that came gift-wrapped with management and marketing expertise from a team of consultants. And hotel consultants these days are not just proffering advice: from designing and planning projects to running day-to-day operations, they are into it up to their ears.

Without owning any property, two of them are even beginning to resemble hotel chains. Bombay's Residency Hotels, run by the husband-and-wife team of Rajeev and Roshan Chopra, is involved in 10 ventures, from beach resorts to business hotels. Delhi's A.K. Dave and son Uttam, who control the rights to the Quality Inns franchise through a joint venture, already head a feverishly expanding chain of 19 hotel projects. Says Rabindra Seth, a consultant to the ITC-run Welcomgroup chain: "The trend (towards a greater role for consultants) is growing because many new entrepreneurs are getting into hotels."

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layderman

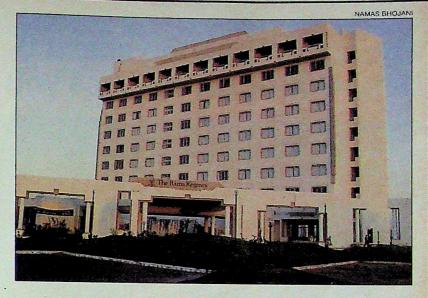
ones

O, LTD.

If promoters and consultants are increasingly headed for the honeymoon suite these days, it's partly because they need to. In the past, newcomers had no choice but to tie the knot with one of the major five-star chains before splashing into the hotel pool, But it was an uneasy relationship at best. The promoters resented having to wait at the table for hotel industry chieftains; the latter, frustrated by the failure of owners to plan and invest for the future, started insisting on signing long-term lease deals.

"That's why promoters are linking up now with consultants instead," explains R. Subramaniam, managing director of the Tourism Finance Corporation, which has loaned Rs 125 crore for 80 hotel projects since it was set up barely a year ago.

The new hoteliers clearly need help. Says Uttam Dave: "Many are selfmade entrepreneurs, and totally new



With builders, transport operators, jewellers and liquor magnates getting into the hotel business, consultants are having a field day.





A.K. Dave with son; Chopra (left); (top) Surat's Rama Regency: greater role

to the business. We are promoting projects on behalf of builders, transport operators, jewellers, liquor magnates, and even the country's largest manufacturer of railway sleepers."

Rajeev and Roshan Chopra set up Residency Hotels in 1985 after eventful stints with the Oberoi, Holiday Inn and the Travel Corporation of India chains. Today they operate four hotels-the Surat Regency, the Connaught Palace in Delhi, the Resort in Bombay and the Carlton in Kodaikanal. Two more are under construction in Bangalore and Bombay, and four others are being planned in Coimbatore, Kodaikanal and Bombay. Several of the properties are owned by the K. Raheja builders group, but the newest and grandest, the Surat Regency, has been promoted by the Rama brothers, non-resident Indians who run a successful motel chain in the US.

Unlike Dave, who is connected to what is now the world's largest hotel

group, consultants like the Chopras do not as yet provide access to a world-wide marketing network—essential for a five-star property in a competitive metrolocation. But with the expansion in their business, the Chopras now plan to link up with an independent international marketing network.

It is too early to predict the emergence of other large hotel consultancy operations. Dave is confident that independent professionals, managing a couple of small to medium properties, are bound to multiply. This, according to Pesi Shaw of the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India, will be only for the better. "If a new entrepreneur blunders, especially at the design and planning stage, he has to live with his mistakes forever," he explains. Consultants now guarantee a confident beginning. —M. RAHMAN

### The safest parking space before your car reaches you





COMPUTER INDUSTRY

#### Losing Chips

#### Setback in hardware sector

THE big numbers won't materialise for the Indian computer industry. Market leader HCL will have to wait another year to hit its Rs 300-crore turnover mark. Modi-Olivetti was aiming at a Rs 54-crore sales figure but will manage less than three-fifths of that. DCM Data Products has lost all hopes of a turnaround and will instead just about break even.

Overall, an industry used to 40 per cent riproaring growth had to adjust to 14-15 per cent in the year to March 1991 and the near-term prospects aren't any better. "I cannot see any positive indicators for the next year,' says Rajendra Pawar, president of the Manufacturers' Association of Information Technology.

The key lesson learnt in the 1989-91 period, which saw the public sector Electronics Trade & Technology Development Corporation launch a personal computer (PC) for Rs 12,000, is that price-cuts pinch bottom lines more than they pep demand. The Government's import squeeze effectively squelched hopes of stemming the downturn. Late last year the Reserve Bank of India slapped a 50-per cent margin on importers (the margins

have now been raised to 133 per cent)—a body blow to the industry. Import duties were also raised by 15-20 per cent.

Even the toughies have been hit. Wipro Information Technology Ltd (WITL), which relied less on price cuts than the others, feels that production schedules will be upset. Says S.R. Gopalan, Wipro's vicepresident (finance and planning): "The availability of finished goods could be severely affected." That means delayed deliveries and a further profit squeeze. Says Veer Sagar, chief executive of DCM: "If you don't deliver, you can't collect (your dues). It hits you both ways." One reason why even HCL had the mortification of seeing its credit rating downgraded by the Credit Rating Information Services India Ltd has been a decline in profitability.

The industry has been hit in another way too with a cashstrapped government cutting back on capital expenditure over the last few months. DCM, which sells a fifth of its machines to the public sector and the Government, thus cannot declare a profit in 1990-91. With losses of Rs 14 crore already in the books, the turnaround will have to wait for another year. Ditto for ICIM, burdened with Rs 4.9 crore of earlier losses to wipe out.

Survival strategies in the industry now revolve around alliances and improving revenues. HCL has allied itself with Hewlett Packard (HP) of the US in order to gain an entry into the highvalue workstation, supermini and

mainframe computer markets, which are less price-sensitive and growing fast (see-chart). PC maker Modi-Olivetti signed up with Digital Equipment (India) Ltd (DEIL) and A.K.Dey, general manager (marketing), says it will cover 20 per cent of PC turnover.

HCL is backing its revamp proposals by going in for a corporate reorganisation as well. Computers will be run as a separate company (with HP of the US being given an equity stake) as will the reprographics and measuring instruments business (see following story), thus reverting to the mid-'80s situation when the busi-

PRASHANT PANJIAR

COMPUTER SALES

Computer assembly line: struggling to break even

nesses were separate. Others are trying to balance their lossmaking computer portfolios by targeting exports. DCM reported success recently by winning an export order of Rs 10 crore. At ICIM, the plans are to lift bottom lines by a greater stress on software export and by the execution of turn-key projects.

None of these is going to ease the short-term pain, Ashok Soota, with's boss, says the cash crunch will force a number of computer companies to go out of business. Mike Shah, chief executive of DEIL, says 1991-92 may well see layoffs and bankruptcies.

That, for a sunrise industry, is not the most cheery of messages.

-GAYATRI BHANDARKAR

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

# AN ALMOND A DAY KEEPS THE DENTIST AWAY

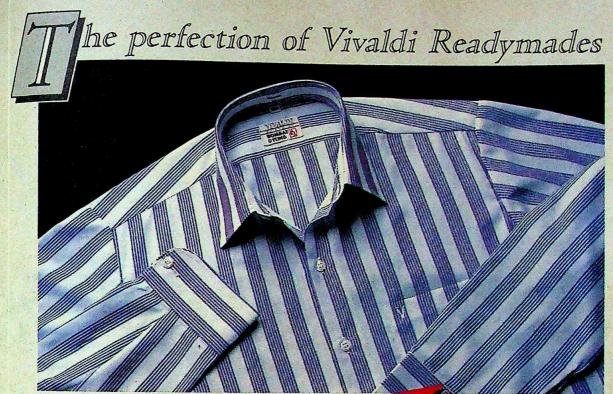


THE ALMOND OR BADAAM IS THE MOST TOOTH-FRIENDLY NUT. IT IS A RICH SOURCE OF CALCIUM AND IRON. BOTH VERY NECESSARY FOR HEALTHY GUMS AND STRONG TEETH.

ISSUED IN THE INTEREST OF THE PUBLIC BY BLUE DIAMOND ALMOND GROWERS, SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA.



SOURCE: U.S.D.A. HANDBOOK 8-12, COMPOSITION OF FOODS: NUT AND SEED

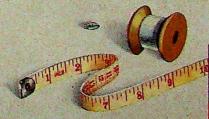


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### THE PSYCHO-ANALYSIS (Shouldn't you know what your Sky

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you fully appreciate Skybags' dependable zip.
protective bumpers, and
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Man on the move, you hate
being made to wait for your
own luggage. You love the breezy
portability of Skybags' entire range.



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You might set your work pace by the latest Swiss quartz. But your heart is tuned to the chimes of old times.

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Makes perfect business-travel sense.



In its new VHS video cassette recorders, Sony offers you a uniquely simple video operating feature: a Dual Mode Shuttle Ring. Instead of pressing different buttons, now all you do is turn Sony's new shuttle ring for a variety of tape transport functions : play, forward or reverse slow, normal,



double speed, cue/review, FR picture search... Amazing. isn't it? It's also amazingly simple! That's not all. You will find a lot of the advanced features you have come to expect from Sony in the two VCRs. So, get your hands on one now and find out why people are saying 'Yes' to Sony VHS.

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#### SLV-X30

- •2-System (PAL/MESECAM) •Dual Mode Shuttle Ring •Super Access Mechanism & High Speed Rewind •Turbo Picture to improve inferior picture quality •Digital Auto Tracking •Auto Menu
- •1-Month/8-Event Timer•Still & Slow Motion •FR Picture Search •Auto Head Cleaner •Auto Volt
- •HQ •Uni Commander (Controls both SLV-X30 and Black Trinitron)



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PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Gold: seller choosing a customer

according to Managing Director Raman Kant Munjal, will be a "limited version", meaning only 1,500 of them will be manufactured. Gold is essentially a hyped-up avatar of Hero's staid-looking co-100 mobike and is

meant to be a commemorative model. Says Pawan Suri, marketing manager: "We wish to declare our success." And "we want to do it in such a way that the public remembers it," adds Munjal. To be sold only to opinion leaders (whatever that may mean), this will probably be the first time when the seller will actually be choosing a customer.

#### Going for Gold

Like this new offering from the Hero Honda stable? Sorry, you won't get it unless you happen to be an "opinion leader". To be launched on May 30—the day Hero Honda hopes to attain a production-mark of 5 lakh 100cc motorcycles since inception—the Hero Honda 'Gold' model,

#### **Groovy Garment**

A new fibre is making its mark on fashion catwalks: jute. Last year, audiences in Bangalore, Delhi and Calcutta managed to sit through fashion shows devoted to jute fabrics. Jute has arrived as garment material after being used in carpets

... Amazing

You will find

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on one now

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APIA SERVICE CO

VHS.

Jute fabric: new use



and furnishing fabric.

"We wanted to give a new orientation," says L.V. Saptharishi, joint secretary, Ministry of Textiles, which has egged the industry into new areas. Currently, more than 40 units have begun looking beyond gunny bags. Four years ago, just 12,000 tonnes—around 1 per cent of

the total output—went into innovative items. Now the figure is more than five times as much at around 65,000 tonnes. That's still barely 5 per cent of production, but by 1995 the figure could double.

good That's news for an industry that had been going to seed in the face of competition from Bangladesh and synthetic substitutes. Perhaps the future holds more something than just sackcloth ashes for and India's jute mills.

#### **The New Tigers**

A survey of 1,500 international businessmen by the Geneva-based World Economic Forum finds three Asian countries (excluding Japan) among the Top Five nations that will improve their global competitiveness this year. The three are not the traditional Asian tigers. They are: Thailand, South Korea and Malaysia. Needless to say, India figures nowhere in the pecking order.

#### COMPETITIVE CLIMBERS - TOP FIVE

COUNTRIES THAT WILL SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE
THEIR GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS IN 1931

RANKED BY BUSINESSMEN AS:

1st MOST COMPETITIVE

2nd MOST COMPETITIVE

3rd MOST COMPETITIVE

3rd MOST COMPETITIVE

WILLIAM MOST COMPETITIVE

UNIFIED JAPAN SOUTH THAILAND MALAYSIA

GERMANY JAPAN SOUTH THAILAND MALAYSIA

#### **Brochure Pitch**

have become the new medium for exclusivity. At the forefront are the metro boutiques spending Rs 100 or more per brochure. Mutiny, a Delhi boutique, spends Rs 60 per brochure. Glitterati of Bombay spends Rs 3 lakh twice a year on brochures.

"The brochure is the designer's vision of what his muse should look like," says Ajay Garkal of Mutiny. "An image of what the artist has in mind." What the boutique owners have in mind, of course, is big money.

ALD COMPETITIVENESS REPORT 1991

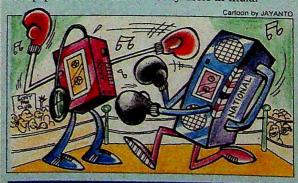


#### **Spillover War**

■ Indians cannot import electronic goods like twoin-ones or TV sets, but that has not stopped Japan's Matsushita from having film star Mithun Chakravorty vociferously rooting for its products.

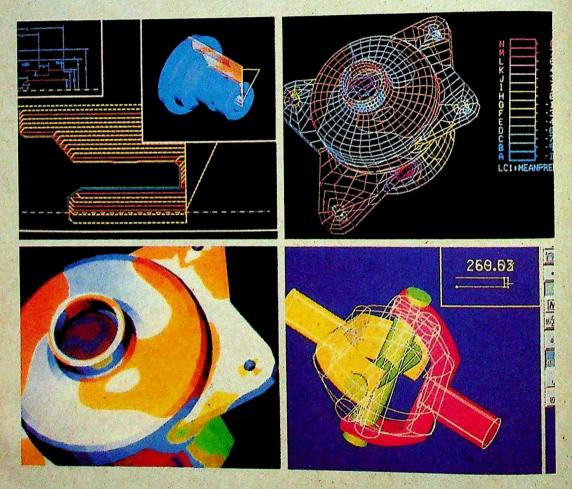
Rival Sony through newspaper ads beckoned Indian users to join the Sony Fan Club and "keep in touch" with the corporation. The club's ownership has gone to Delhi's Olympia Electronics Ltd.

Till mid-April, the club had about 1,700 members. However, this is a far cry from the actual number—an estimated 2 lakh—of Sony users in India.



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Rolta presents the RoltaStation 6000/7000 workstations. The state-of-the-art workstations from Intergraph, now manufactured in India by Rolta in technical collaboration with Intergraph Inc., USA, the world's largest company dedicated to developing and manufacturing interactive computer graphics system. These engineering workstations feature superior performance, unmatched power, speed and ergonomics, for every conceivable application.

And that is not all! In partnership with Intergraph, we offer the largest selection of functional solutions available from any computer graphics company to-day. Solutions ranging from mechanical, electronics and plant design

to a number of applications in architecture, civil engineering, mapping/GIS, oil/gas exploration and scanning for management of technical drawings and documents.

And further we provide technical services to support our hardware and software. Beginning with implementation and installation services, we give you complete technical support and comprehensive maintenance services for hardware and software. We offer CAD/CAM solutions that do the job and do it well.

In the area of mechanical design engineering and manufacturing Intergraph is the acknowledged innovator.

#### MECHANICAL DESIGN, ENGINEERING & MANUFACTURING

Intergraph has redefined the standards in the mechanical marketplace by introducing object-based technology. Rolta offers sophisticated solutions from Intergraph to automate the entire development process from initial concept through final production. Using a network of hardware and software resources, our systems link engineers, departments and functions to keep all phases of complex design projects moving on schedule, through controlled access to common information resources.

#### PROJECT INTEGRATION

Designers, engineers, drafters, manufacturing personnel, and management have controlled access to a common information resource. The organized flow of engineering data eliminates duplicated efforts and streamlines communication among related development tasks.

#### COMPLETE ENGINEERING MODELS

Designers can choose from a variety of 3D

modelling tools to build precise geometric representations of components and complex assemblies. To enhance the model's engineering utility, our design software adds to the geometry a wealth of related design intelligence.

#### **DESIGN ANALYSIS**

Intergraph computer aided engineering software helps optimize designs for quality, reliability, and manufacturability. Our analysis packages combine interactive graphics with numerical techniques to simulate performance under service and test conditions.

#### MANUFACTURING EFFICIENCY

Intergraph manufacturing software promotes simultaneous progress in design and production engineering. Data developed by product designers contributes directly to tool and fixture design and process planning. With our numerical control programming software, design models are efficiently transformed into instructions for automated production machinery.

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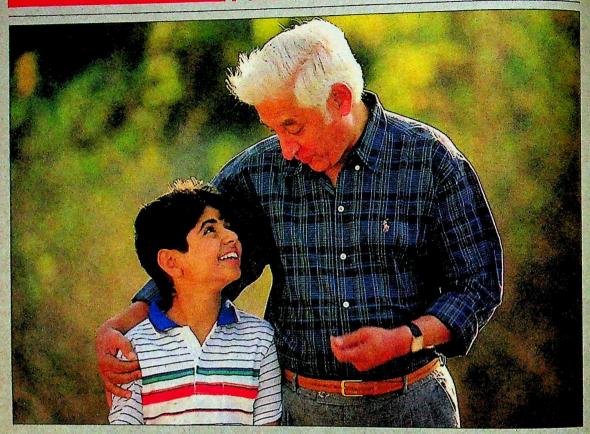
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#### **Letter From A Puzzled Son**

Dear Hom,

Thank you very much for your advice that I should vote wisely. As you said I have brought all the party manifestos and, though you won't believe it, have actually read them. Not bad guys these politicians no matter what the papers say. I am so excited-what glowing plans!

It seems if we all vote Congress(I) we can have private TV and radio stations so you won't have to sit through those Doordarshan serials which don't make you laugh or cry. They are all going to compete with Prasar Bharati which you say is bit of a farce. Don't know if they'll have functional or real autonomy but I can hardly wait for our Ted Turners to

staid magazines, what? The Congress(I) is also going to build a million houses for the village

emerge. Getting tired of working for

poor, a million farm wells, a million houses for SC/STs, create 10 million jobs, and give five million light connections (five million points of light, mom?) to Harijans and tribals. And all this it

is going to do in the first year. It's going to be a government that works so much faster. How much exactly is a million, mom?

And if we vote the National Front it will wipe off unemployment, no less, in 10 years. Jaipal Reddy won't say if we will still need Mandal then. Funny, V.P. Singh no longer mentions the right to work. That is left to the BJP which will implement a job guarantee scheme nationwide. And Chandra Janata Dal(S) says it will create something called Rachana Vahini to provide 10 million jobs to the youth. He will also make everybody read and write in four years flat. You always said the guy means well, mom, just that he got

into bad company.

As for the economy, if the Congress(I) could have it, the private sector is going to be in highways, roads, bridges and mutual funds. And the public sector out of many places.

Apparently budgetary deficit will be so small that we can forget about it. The BJP is going to cut money supply by half (is that a good thing to do, mom?). The National Front says it will cut deficit and the Congress(I) says it will cut non-development expenditure by 10 per cent, again in the first year itself. How can they implement all those promised schemes and still cut spending, mom? Do you think it is going to cut much ice with the voters?

The National Front will also see to it that all villages have a road, water supply, and good loos within a decade. And all of them want to set up a special force to deal with communal riots. Though the BJP is not liking it one bit, the Congress(I) has also promised to include the backward among 'minorities' in the reservations.

As for caste, the National Front is promising a hefty plan allocation to SC/STs. The Congress(I) is going to do 16 things from setting up a Rs 110 crore Ambedkar University at Lucknow to setting up special courts for tribals. And the BJP plans to rename Delhi's Palam airport after Ambedkar! Ah, such compassion, mom.

That sounds like Ram rajya except they don't agree about what to do with the Ram temple at Ayodhya. The BIP wants to make the temple while everybody else wants to make a general policy about temples.

Then they all only want to do good in Kashmir, Punjab, and Assam; it is only that the terrorists won't read the manifestos. And you should read with what feeling they write about commitment to decentralised administration and power to the people. Then why do so many state governments keep getting dismissed, mom?

They sound so nice, but I still don't know whom to vote for. So, on voting day I'll probably go and just fix myselfa large drink which you say is not a very responsible thing to do in a democracy. alde Piwari Ever yours.

INDIA TODAY presented a questionnaire to the main contenders. Pranab Mukherjee answered for Congress(I), Jaipal Reddy for NF, and S.P. Malviya for JD(S). The BJP's stand is given in the cover story section.

QUESTIONS	CONGRESS(I)	NF	JD(S)
Cut state subsidies on food, fertiliser?	Will reduce non-development expenditure	NO	NO
Implement Mandal Commission in toto?	Continue special measures including job reservations for economically backwards	YES	With improvement
Negotiate with Punjab & Kashmir extremists?	Will try to work out peaceful settlement	YES	YES
Make public audit of political funds?	Government will decide	YES	Party will decide
Construction of Ram temple at Ayodhya?	Without dismantling the mosque	Without touching the mosque	Without damag- ing the mosque
More financial autonomy to states?	Sarkaria Commission's recommendations will be expedited	Yes	May be
Repeal Article 370?	No	No	No
Encourage foreign investment?	To be decided by the government	High-priority, high-tech areas	Yes

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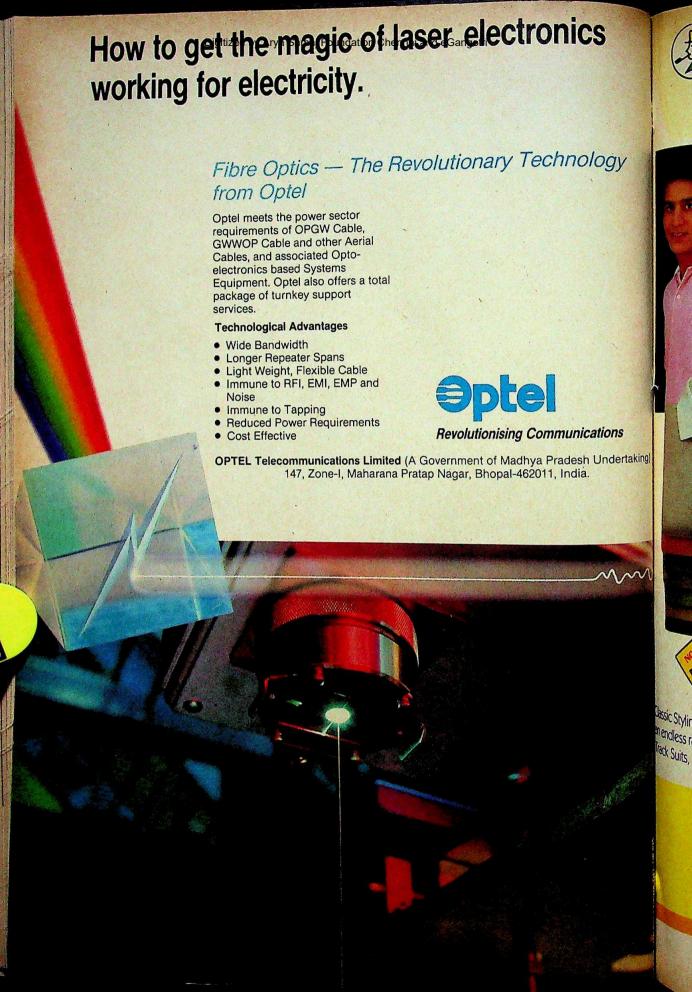
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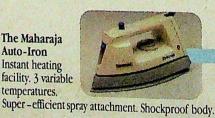
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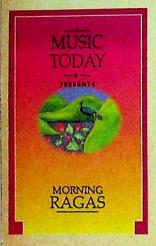
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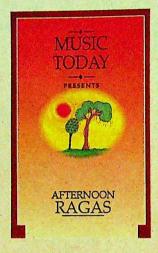
The future of secularism has come under fire in this election and the electorate is divided along sectarian lines. POLA TODAY invited a group of prominent thinkers, analysts and politicians to debate the issue.

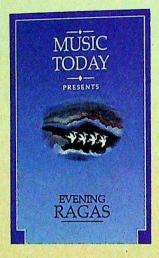
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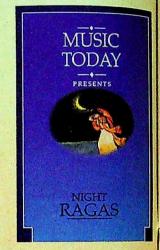
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In the first debate, M.J. Akbar, Bipan Chandra, Jawed Habeeb, Swapan Dasgupta, Girilal Jain, Arun Jaitley, Ashis Nandy, Khushwant Singh, Jaswant Singh, and Sitaram Yechuri discuss the roots of secularism, its present meaning and its future status in India. The eight-hour debate in New Delhi was chaired by Editor AROON PURIE, edited by Features Editor SHEKHAR GUPTA and assisted by sub-editors Devika Singh and Anuradha Awasthi. The edited version of the debate is given below.

#### WHAT IS SECULARISM?

Girilal Jain: There is a kind of return to religion in various parts of the world. In our terms, Indian nationalism has by and large been defined in terms of the Soviet experiment, but with its collapse it is untenable to continue to define Indian nationalism in those terms. Further, earlier there was a legitimate concern about Muslims' susceptibilities globally, which is likely to decline as a result of Gulf developments.

Khushwant Singh: I think he is equating Indian nationalism with the renaissance of Hinduism. And that our freedom movement was essentially an expression of that renaissance. The facade that Gandhi and Nehru put on it was secularism. In fact, it was not in that sense secular because it was not

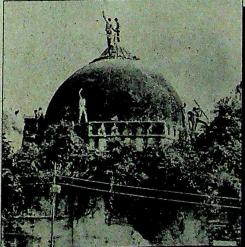
non-religious. Their defiof secularism was largely sarvadharma sadbhavna, respect for all religions. For a thousand years, the country had been ruled by the Muslims and then by the British, and Hinduism came into its own with the freedommovement. And with freedom, it was to be expected that at some stage the Hindus would assert themselves.

Bipan Chandra: I'm afraid I do not agree with Giri at all when he says that Indian nationalism, and secularism as part of it, was defined by the So-

At a subliminal level secularism is all about identity, cultural heritage and nationalism, but at its most superficial it exhibits itself in the virulence and conflict of Ayodhya and communal riots.

Kar sewaks atop the dome of the Babri Masjid on October 30, 1990

Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



viet experiment. Here secularism has three definitions. One, that religion and politics should be separated. Gandhiji, when he said that religion and politics cannot be separated, meant religion as a spiritual and moral system. He realised that in a country like India, the mixing of a specific belief system with politics results in communalism.

The second definition of secularism was that in a multi-religious society a state has to have an equal approach towards all religions. Equal respect or equal indifference.

The third aspect is very important in India, because the colonial state against which the national movement was organised was already following the first and second precepts. But it was trying to divide the Hindus and Muslims involved in the national movement. So secularism was defined as opposition to communalism.

Ashis Nandy: I would have suspected that the real concern which was sought to be coped with, by our leaders through the concept of secularism since the last century, was religious and ethnic intolerance, But today we have roughly oneand-a-halfriots a day in India, Also,

most of our insights into the western concept of secularism, state and nationalism are derived from books, not from life. I will give my favourite example. When you insist on a formal dress in a western political system, whether it is a communist regime or a social democratic or a liberal regime, people wear ties. We might not be aware of it, but I think Christian, at least in his subconscious, is unaware of the fact that the tie derives from the cross. It has a cultural and religious meaning. instance.

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Mrs Thatcher launches a ship by breaking a champagne bottle, she is actually in a not-so-manifest fashion invoking the Christian concept of transubstantiation. We do it with a coconut. But in our case we are defensive because we have purchased the formal textbook differences between the state and culture ready-made from western writers about western societies, not from western experiences.

lawed Habeeb: In my opinion, the definition of secularism is related to identity. Identity of the nation that Is India or Bharat or Hindustan or Hind. In my opinion, the basic misery of the Indian people is that according to the Constitution there is equality for all Indians. But simultaneously the Constitution guarantees the rights of minorities. That is the basis of the contradiction. When minorities ask about the preservation of that Article, a section of the people in the name of the majority contradicts this. And they cry that this is minorityism, that this is against nationalism. I belong to a Muslim minority, where will I ask about the identity of my religion. I will use the Constitution. That is why it is a very important phase of our existence in India that for the first time, and I am happy, that the BJP has demanded clearly the definition of secularism. We only seem to need secularism at the time of communal riots. It is on dead bodies we have to decide the definition of secularism and it cannot be done.

Sitaram Yechuri: I think an im-

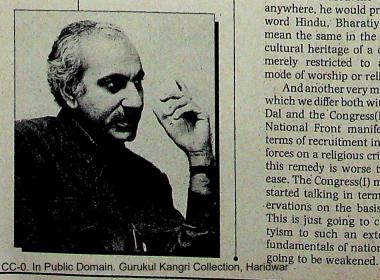
portant element that is being missed out is that it was not merely at the level of, say, human consciousness that this concept of secularism arose, but there was also a very important social dynamic that was taking place in the 17th century. And that was the transition to capitalism and the dismantling of feudalism. So long as India continues to have this backlog of feudal structures, and feudalism has not yet been eliminated, the scourge of

M.I. AKBAR Congress(1) Leader

"One of the problems with this word secularism is that we never managed to get an adequate Indian word for what we wanted to say."

"Secularism is the coexistence of religions. And this is very critical."

"I'm a little relieved there is a secessionist tendency in Assam and Tamil Nadu. It takes away the edge from religion as the only source of secessionism."



anti-secular ideas will continue

So if you want to really talk in terms of solutions to the entire concept of secularism, you'll have to talk in terms also of solutions connected with India's economic progress. Today secularism in India will also have to take into account the other ethnic divisions. These cannot be embraced under one slogan of Hindutva or Hinduism. To those who would charge such a definition as being pseudo-secular, I would say that the Hindus preach pseudo-Hinduism.

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Arun Jaitley: Sometime in the early '50s, a strange misconceived definition of the word secularism was initiated in India, under which whatever was identified with Hinduism. Indian ethos or Indian culture, really became obscurantist, fundamentalist, communal and hypocritical. The consequence of which is that if today there were to be a Constituent Assembly in India and Dr Ambedkar were to get up and say I propose Article 48, the state shall endeavour to ban cow slaughter today, the 86 members of the BJP would probably be the only dissenters on these issues. Hinduism in India really does not connote merely a religion. It's a cultural ethos in this country. The Muslims did not enter India along with Babar, they were Indian residents who, for some reason, were so indifferent that they converted their mode of worship and their mode of religion.

Now, it would be extremely unfair to the Indian Muslim also, to relate him not to the Indian cultural ethos but to an invader. Therefore, as far as the BJP is concerned, Mr Advani has repeatedly said that even though he has not used the word Hindu anywhere, he would prefer that the word Hindu, Bharatiya or Indian mean the same in the context of a cultural heritage of a country, not merely restricted to a particular mode of worship or religion.

And another very major point on which we differ both with the Janata Dal and the Congress(I) today: the National Front manifesto talks in terms of recruitment into the police forces on a religious criterion. Now. this remedy is worse than the disease. The Congress(I) manifesto has started talking in terms of job reservations on the basis of religion. This is just going to carry minorityism to such an extent that the fundamentals of national unity are

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Swapan Dasgupta: What is really being asked now is, what sort of India do we want? There are twin strands of the national movementone which saw the state having a total indifference to religion and the other allowing a certain amount of discrimination in favour of the minorities. There are some people who would say that the problem with India today is that there are very severe impediments to the growth of a national identity. And I think they've listed two or three things, for example Article 370 and separate laws for Muslims.

There is another view that India is a diverse collection of autonomous units which have been brought together by the modern state and that to even attempt to have a composite nationalism is anathema, is alien and counter-productive. It is fundamentally these two world-views that are going to be debated in this election. There has to be a confrontation and it is just as well that the confrontation is taking place with the ballot box rather than through bloody riots.

Yechuri: I am sufficiently provoked by Swapan, I must say, to react. This is not the first time that this issue of secularism has come up. Torefresh your memory, I'll take you back to a book written by Golwalkar way back in 1939, where he talked about defining our nationhood. And there he outlined the entire plan of the Hindu rashtra, of how the freedom struggle should be for the establishment of the Hindu rashtra. What is happening today is the revival of that discussion and that struggle. Let's not delude ourselves that we are searching for a new concept of secuarism. And secularism, whatever it is defined as, must ensure that there is the separation of religion from politics. How you're going to do it is a

Dasgupta: The crucial difference lies in this; does a national identity have a cultural content? Yechuri: I'm sorry. There you're

"Secular parties have tried to treat Muslims as a vote bank, catering not to Muslims but to Muslim communalism."

"People like me favour a uniform code as we believe that not having it is against the Muslims."



"Secularists criticise majority communalism but ignore the communalism of the minorities."

BIPAN CHANDRA Professor of History, Jawaharlal Nehru University mixing up again. A cultural content is different from a religious content. It is not a subtle difference.

Jain: Can there be a culture without religion?

Yechuri: Is culture only religion? Jain and Dasgupta: No.

Yechuri: Exactly. Now what else

Jain: That's not the point.

Yechuri: It is. The crux of the point is that culture is something more than religion. The greatest misdeed that is being done to the country today is that culture is being strait-jacketed with religion. And the diversity of that religion itself is not being taken into account. I'll tell you the interesting story of the Ravanayana. It's as much part of the Hindu ethos as the Ramayana is. And there Ravana is the hero and Rama is the villain. And the entire Dravidian movement bases this as its ideological prop. Now they're

as much of Hindus as we are.

And I'll give you another question. I come from Andhra Pradesh, was born to a high-caste Hindu Brahminical family and was initiated into Hinduism at the age of 11, which I've subsequently given up. However, all through ingrained in our consciousness is that in the Ramayana, every single king south of the Vindhyas is depicted as an animal. Hanuman, Bali, Sugreeva, Jamavantha. Now this is part of our historical culture.

Jain: I find this very strange.

Yechuri: You may find it strange. The point I'm making is it's a diversity. So the current struggle today in the country is not for the definition of secularism. It is between the tenets of modern India that were enshrined in our Constitution vis-a-vis the resurgence of communalism. The point at issue is once the anti-imperialist. anti-colonialist struggle ended, Indian diversity began asserting itself in terms of its own different cultural traditions. And, therefore, the ideological basis of Indian unity can only be possible if you respect these diversities and allow each one of these

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#### SECULARISM

diversities to flourish.

Khushwanthassuggestedalotof short-term measures which I would agree with. I would only add one more to it, which I think Professor Bipan Chandra and many other historians have been trying to do in their life. For example, this sort of a division of Indian history into sections like ancient, medieval and modern is basically a communal division: the Hindu rule, the Muslim rule and the Christian rule.

Akbar: The fact is that the history of the minority is being made the target. Eight hundred years of Muslim rule is being made the target, the creation of Pakistan is being made the target and the minorities in India, particularly the Muslims, who are one of the most economically deprived, are being made to pay for the so-called alleged sins of history. The whole Babar episode...

Chandra: Unless Babar is rooted out from this country, this country cannot survive. I mean it's becoming hysterical and hysteria has its level of power. Hysteria communicates for a while-Hitler did it successfully. The end of hysteria we know is a shambles. When we talk about the crisis of secularism, it can have two approaches: one, that it is a good thing, and the other that it is in a crisis and we should be looking for a replacement; and the other is to look at the roots of the crisis.

For example, I am very fond of bhajans and simultaneously I am secular and an atheist. This is a problem, by the way, which was faced by Veer Savarkar. He made it very clear that Hindutva cannot be derived from Hindu religion and religion should have nothing to do with it. Savarkar was in fact a practising atheist.

Dasgupta: I don't want to interfere, but would you define Hinduism as a religion?

Chandra: Just a minute, that is a very different question. Savarkar was very clear ...

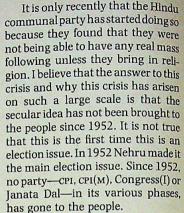
Jain: Listen, we can't go on fudging issues. We can't go on talking about the diversities in Hinduism. We still talk about Hinduism as a religion.

Chandra: I have not talked about it; my point was different, Hindu communalism therefore cannot be defined in religious terms.

**IAWED HABEEB** Founder, Babri Masjid Action Committee

"We only seem to need secularism at the time of communal riots. It is on dead bodies we have to decide the definition of secularism and it cannot be done."

"Muslim kings have committed excesses. But unfortunately the history of Muslim kings is considered the history of Islam. Similarly. Indian tradition is wrongly called Hindu tradition."



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On the other hand, the BJP has in the last three years gone to the masses. One aspect as to why the BJP is doing this is that the secular parties have tried to treat Muslims as a vote bank. They have tried to cater not to Muslims but to Muslim communalism. Like in Punjab they catered to Hindu-Sikh communalism; in Kerala. to Muslim-Christian communalism. Their contention is that minorities are favoured. The problem is nobody has gone to the people and told them what is the heritage of the independence movement, what was Gandhi saying, what was Nehru saying and why we need secularism.

To say that an ideology like communalism cannot succeed is very wrong. There are positive reasons why it may not, but that depends on the activity of, I don't say political parties only, but also of the intelligentsia, that is the press, the teachers and all others, which has so far been sturdily secular.

Habeeb: I can sum up the fear of

Muslims and the fear of Hindus. The Hindus fear that the Muslims can become politically dominant again and that secular parties are using Muslims as a political force. Therefore. there is a challenge from the Hindu side and they want to say that there should be no political force of Muslims. That is the real problem in my opinion. The Muslims fear that they can be culreligiously turally, dominated by Hindus.

We have to remove the fears of both Hindus and Muslims. It is high time that Indian



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politicians and religious leaders came to an agreement because I think that the Constitution of India is a shining example of an agreement between all the cultural, linguistic and political identities.

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In the present context, if we want to save the future of Muslims or Hindus or Indians then we should be very clear about what is culture, what is religion and what is the demand of national interest. For example, when you break a coconut to inaugurate a building, any non-Hindu may say that it is Hindu culture and refuse to participate. I think people can be very easily convinced that it is Indian culture and it should be accepted.

Once, watching television I heard that Atal Behari Vajpayee said Ram Janmabhoomi is not a religious problem for Hindus but a cultural one. I was moved. But if it's a cultural problem then there should be a cultural route of unity between Hindus and Muslims. I find Allama Iqbal is the best symbol for it. He has written apoem where he has said that Ram is the Imam-e-Hind-leader of India. Taking the risk of being eliminated from the community, with tears I said to the Hindus and the leaders of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement that Ram as the cultural identity can become the symbol of unity. But when a person who was in the Babri Masjid Action Committee nounced that he was ready for establishing the authority of Ram there was no response.

Akbar: I think one of the greatest problems with this word secularism is that we never managed to get an adequate Indian word for what we wanted to say. We are still using an English word which is, I would suggest, even irrelevant to the Indian context. Secularism in India as Gandhi institutionalised it is not the absence of religion. Secularism is the coexistence of religions. And this is very critical. The real argument is between the coexistence of religions and the use of a particular religion to create a religious state.

To go back to the elemental strand, I do feel that what we are seeing today is only another manifestation of at least a 100-year-old struggle: what the nature of the modern Indian state after Independence will be. Now, neither Christianity nor Islam anywhere in the world has provided enough evidence for us to believe that religion by itself

"There has to be a confrontation through the ballot box rather than through bloody riots."

"The VHP is always being asked to give up its claim. Why does no-one appeal to the Muslims to make this gesture?"



"The force generated by the Ram Janmabhoomi campaign is not going to disappear."

SWAPAN DASGUPTA Journalist is enough to create a nation-state. The Muslim League may believe that Islam is strong enough to create a modern state in the name of Islam. The Hindu rashtra is essentially a reflection of the same theme.

Now, actually I would argue that let's keep secularism as a religious concept. But let's say that secularism is only one of the many causes that can splinter this country. To an extent though, I have to tell you honestly that I'm a little relieved that there is a secessionist tendency in Assam and in Tamil Nadu. It takes away the edge from religion as the only source of secessionism, disintegration, and once it takes away the edge, the minority in particular feels far more relieved and secure, ke bhaiya siraf Islam ke naam pe ya Sikhism ke naam pe log Hind todne nahin lage hain. Aur bhi jhagde hain (that people are not breaking the nation only in the name of Islam or Sikhism. There are other disputes too.)

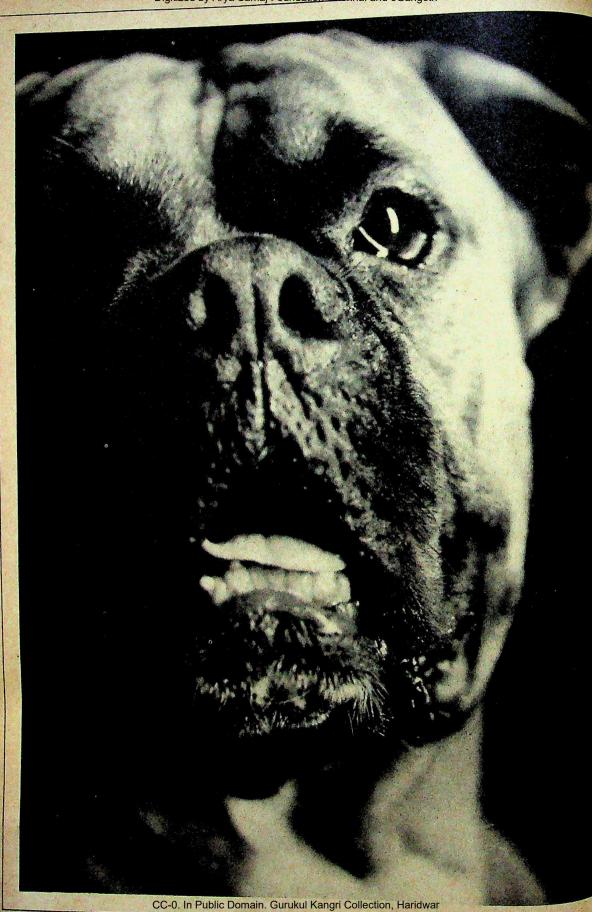
Khushwant Singh: I've tried to spell out three or four specific points

which any secular state should have formulated for itself. First, the government people—presidents, prime ministers, cabinet ministers, chief ministers-should make no display of their religiosity, which is common now. From the time since Nehru died. it's become a common practice. You found that in the extreme with Giani Zail Singh when he was chief minister of Punjab.

Just every function had to begin with an ardaas. He was trying to take the wind out of the sails of the Akalis but, as a result, he became the founding father of Sikh fundamentalism.

The second point I tried to make is that the state must stop patronising religion. This grant of lands for the building of places of worship—you see the proliferation of gurdwaras, temples and mosques all over the country, when they're not needed.

Third, I think the misuse of the government media—radio, Doordarshan—if you count the amount of hours that are wasted, I would say wasted, in kirtans, qawalis, aaj ka vichar, it's always religion-oriented, although they try to be even-handed. You have the nauseating misuse of



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#### SECULARISM

loud-speakers at every place you go to. Take processions. Here is another imposition of your religiosity on other people. Muslims, fortunately, only have one procession, the Shias, during Mohurram, but we Sikhs have 10 gurus. So we have their birthdays, days of martyrdom and all. The whole civic life of the city is brought to a halt. And invariably a Hindu procession passing a mosque will take good care to use the most offensive slogans and the Muslims are as quick to take offence. A riot begins. I don't know if we can persuade our leaders who are at the moment involved with elections to take it up. I don't think they will. I have no doubt Akbar will be using these loud-speakers. These are shortterm measures.

Jain: Khushwant, who will enforce them?

Khushwant Singh: Well, we have to build up public opinion. I mean, here we are, you all agree with me that this should be done. So what is so wrong if we get a new minister of information and broadcasting? Let's hope it will be Akbar. He should cut down the amount of time and the misuse of the media.

The Constitution requires us to create a scientific temperament of mind. But look at the use of government media to spread myth and magic like the episodes of Mahabharata and Ramayana. Let the mother teach her children the story of Ramayana. But to display it for a year on Doordarshan is really an opiate for illiterate and semi-illiterate people. It is myth and magic.

Habeeb: Everybody talks about the uniform civil code. I think what should come first is the uniformity of opportunities. Then understanding. And then a uniform civil code. We have to find out whether there is a real urge of people to change the status of Muslim women or Muslim society or is it just to antagonise or slot the Muslim identity.

Chandra: I might point out that this question is guided by a very strange thing. Some people want a uniform code because they say that not having such a code favours the minorities. Others like me favour a uniform code because we believe that not having it is against the Muslims-50 per cent of the Muslims, that is Muslim women.



ARUN JAITLEY BJP Leader

"Hinduism does not connote merely a religion. It's a cultural ethos."

"The real problem has been the tendency to create a subnation psyche."

"Mr Advani has said that even though he has not used the word Hindu, he would prefer that the word Hindu. Bharatiya or Indian mean the same.'

In this country there has been no public debate as to why we failed against communalism when we did successfully fight casteism. against linguism and regionalism. Now, why has the BJP taken up the temple issue? The communal forces found that they can't grow beyond the middle class and that they will remain a marginal force. But I think the communal forces here realiseand they studied the

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experience of the Muslim League and Jinnah-that Jinnah was able to become a mass force, able to take the country towards Partition only when he said Islam was in danger. It is a mystical sort of slogan.

Today I think the only solution possible is the one which V.P. Singh tried in October. Unfortunately, he ran away from it. Today, the only solution is to let the temple be built but to protect the mosque.

I agree that there is strong Muslim communalism in this country. And when I said that secular people have not been taking a hard look, what I mean is that they have not been criticising minority communalism as strongly as they have been criticising majority communalism.

Jain: The issue is: when they talk of coexistence and tolerance, is this tolerance a one-sided affair?

Chandra: It should be all-sided. Habeeb: Muslim kings have committed excesses. But unfortunately the history of Muslim kings is considered the history of Islam. The history of Islam should be related to the Prophet. Similarly, unfortunately, Indian tradition is being called Hindu tradition, in a political language. This is dangerous too. Instead of adopting the Indian tradition of 5,000 years, we are giving it the political name of Hindutva to gain power for a particular party. Why can't the BJP come to power on another political plank? Ram is not a symbol of power, Ram is a symbol of tyaag (sacrifice). We can go on saying that Muslims have butchered Hindus, mismanaged temples and also disrespected women. But there is the other side of the coin-Khusro. Moinuddin Chishti, Nizamuddin,

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the custom of marriages? It is an Indian tradition. It shows that while we have been fighting politically, we were adapting to each other.

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Specifically on the Ram Janmabhoomi issue I think there are two or three formulae and the majority of Muslim leaders accepted those. However, we could not find a single important Hindu in the VHP to accept them. We thought that there must be some sort of compromise or some sense of belonging, because Ram, the personality of Ramchandraji, should be established. If any Muslim wants to disrespect him, I will side with the BJP, I will fight that Muslim, because from the historical, religious and practical point it is beyond my imagination that even a Muslim can say that he disrespects Ram. I differ with Khushwant Singh that Ramayan and Mahabharat should not be shown on TV. I think we must use TV so that different faiths can know each other.

Jaitley: I think the real problem is: what do we conceive as the role of Muslims in India? Are they merely to be voters in elections? Are they merely an instrument of political power or are they going to be citizens of India participating in every sense in the mainstream of Indian life? When some of my Hindu friends use the word "appeasement", I think it is an improper use of the word. This "appeasement" has not really contributed much to the Muslims' social or economic lot. The real problem has been the tendency to create a sub-nation psyche.

Coming to Ayodhya, it is very easy to suggest that the issue has been taken up by the BJP because it promises electoral gains. It could have been electorally beneficial to the BJP in 1989 also, but the BJP leadership was actively trying to persuade the VHP for some kind of compromise. But even a dialogue was not initiated—an impression grew that somehow the only thing the Government had in mind was to sweep the issue under the carpet. The revocation of the ordinance was a telection of these so-called liberal suggestions. Unilaterally, under Pressure from certain Muslim fundamentalist groups, the ordinance was withdrawn. The ostensible reason given for this was that some of the adjacent land was waaf land, How do you acquire waaf land? And Ver every conceivable Hindu temple of any significance in India has been acquired under a law, VaishnoGIRILAL JAIN
Journalist

"Talking of coexistence and tolerance, is this a one-sided affair?"

"Hindus are not aggrieved but have consolidated power. The BJP is an expression of Hindu confidence."

"The Muslims are victims of their own stupidity. They are extraordinarily stupid people. I don't mind this going on record. To fight for a structure which has ceased to be a mosque!"

devi has been acquired. Tirupati has been acquired.

Jaswant Singh: I think secularism, the original meaning of the word and what it has come to mean in India, are two altogether different things. On the ground when it gets practised, it has reduced itself to merely a device for first creating fear, then exploiting that fear, and finally garnering minority votes out of that fear. Therefore, I very strongly and categorically assert that Nehruvian secularism as practised today, not perhaps as he had conceptualised it or intended it, is detrimental to Indian national interests. Secularism is, after all, not merely a principle of governance. It's a very effective, irreplaceable principle. But not a perverted secularism. You cannot turn it into yet another kind of idol that you place in a temple and begin to worship, which is what we tend to do. The more you chase secularism, the less you obtain it and, in fact, it becomes more elusive.

When people talk of composite culture-of course the culture is composite. So many streams have come into it. But I once wrote about it and said that the Ganga has so many streams, sewage water also comes into the Ganga, but you don't call the Ganga a composite Ganga. You call it Ganga. If, instead of calling it Hindutva or Hindu culture, if we called it Indian culture, it would satisfy the pseudo-secularists. How absurd! The United States of America, this great cauldron theory, they don't call themselves a composite cauldron. Or a melting pot.

Nandy: We have not opted for a melting pot. That is a bogus analogy imported from the US. Ours is more of a salad bowl.

Jaswant Singh: My idea of secularism is where the state really has

nothing what so ever to do with religion.

Yechuri: But suppose we say that religion and politics should not be intermixed?

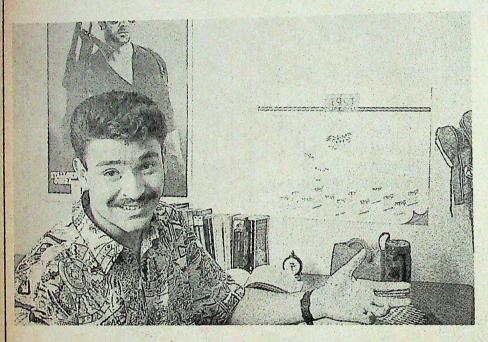
Jaswant Singh: Then you're entering the realm of what is religion. I am also a Hindu. But which Hindu am I? Am I Ramanujacharya or shakt or Shaiv or Vaishnav?

Well, I cannot sit



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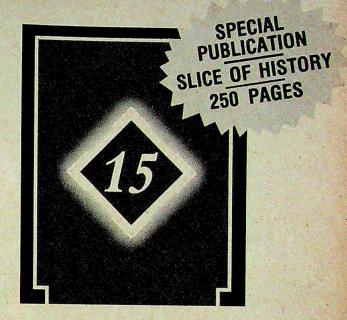
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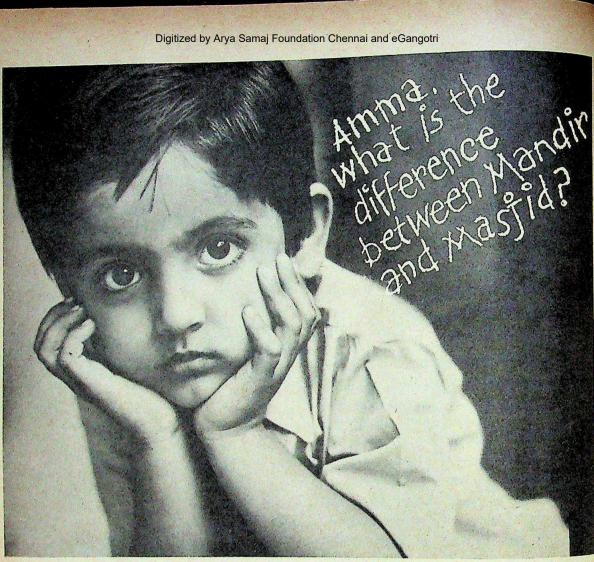
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upon judgement on the thoughts of the framers of the Constitution but I believe that when they framed it. they made many mistakes. And I do believe that the Constitution should not have provided a separate minority status. At that stage it was necessary because the land had been vivisected. I think that this kind of separate status, the Ramakrisha Mission asking for a minority status, is a kind of, not just absurdity, it's a kind of obscenity. Why should you want a minority status? You have equal status. You are just as much an Indian as I

Habeeb: It would be better for some political parties to say specifically that they want to delete this Article from the Constitution, That would be a positive thing. All the parties have their minority forums, even the BJP. Why? Perhaps because everyone looks at the minorities as votes. For example, there were five principles of Muslim politics: Urdu, Muslim personal law, Muslim universities, communal riots, and discrimination. Now see the irony of fate, the same political culture of the Congress which crethese problems always branded another party or ideological group outside that party as responsible for the problems of the minorities. The Ram Janmabhoomi problem was created in the days of the Congress. Shilanyas was done in the days of the Congress regime. The BJP is exploiting it. Muslims are living in dirty ghettos, in slums. No civic amenities. No tubelights. No parks. No hospitals. No roads. No banks. No schools. These are the real problems. Can you mention to me one democratic country which does not suffer from the problem of minorities?

Jain: I will tell you in one sentence. And you ruminate over it. There is only one culture which is not derivative. And that is India. All other cultures are derivative. And therefore syncretist. And therefore these balancing acts.

Nandy: The state of the majority in an open democratic system is automatically dominant and always higher than that of the minorities.

Jain: I really don't know why. I never looked at the Constitution. JASWANT SINGH BJP Leader

"Secularism has become a device for creating fear."

"The more you chase secularism, the less you obtain it and, in fact, it becomes more elusive."



"Of course, the culture is composite. So many streams have come into it. Like Ganga, but you don't call it composite Ganga."

Honestly. Some Articles I mentioned were picked up from fellowjournalists. Often I ring up my former secretary at The Times of India to ask what Article should be mentioned in the context. Because even he is more knowledgeable than me. I have treated the Constitution with the contempt which in my opinion it deserves.

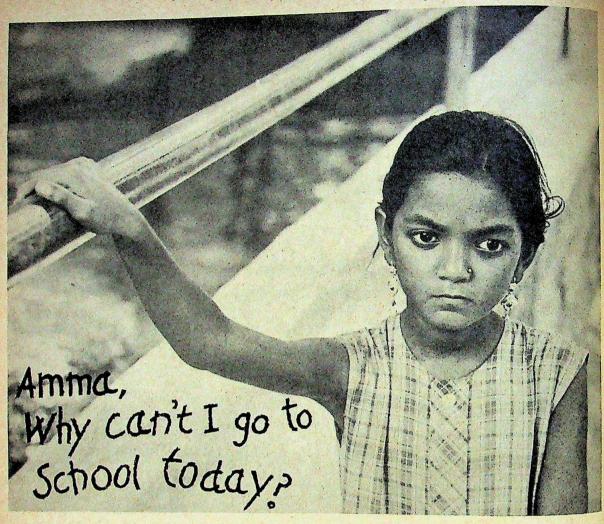
#### WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Yechuri: The people who are using Hinduism today are using it to exploit the religious sentiment for political ends. Take for example what Vivekananda said: "I pity the

man from the depth of my heart who proclaims, who wishes, destruction of other religions and the survival of his own". This is Hindu culture. And what is happening in our country today is totally the antithesis of what this preaches. Sitting down here, in abstract, we can talk about what Hinduism means and what it does not. But in practice, in real life, what does · it mean? What are the slogans that are being given

today in the country? "Babar ki aulad se kaho ki agar Bharat mein rehna hai to Hindu ban kar rehna hoga." The point at issue is that the people on the streets are not discussing the philosophical, epistemological or the ethical elements of Hinduism. They are discussing the right to existence and survival of people in the country on the basis of adherence to a certain religion.

As for Ramjanmabhoomi, the only solution can be a negotiated settlement between the two communities. The time has passed to declare this an archaeological or historical monument. Have a temple built and also a mosque nearby so that the feelings of both commu-



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**VOTE STABILITY** 

VOTE CONGRESS (I)

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EGACORP/C/91

nities are assuaged. This is the tragedy of India today. It is the continuation of a battle that has raged for a century or so between the modern Indian state and what we call a theocratic Hindu rashtra. The way out of this would essentially be not a constitutional or legal way. It has to be a political solution with the acceptance of the people. Forty years of Independence have brought us to the economic situation in our country where the economic frustrations are sought to be diverted on religious issues. The Ram temple at Ayodhya is not going to solve the problem of the number of people below the poverty line, which is more than the population of America. For the forces of Hindu communalism, this is the only agenda. They are strengthening the very edifice of exploitation.

Finally, I would like to say that if we are being charged of being pseudo-secularist today, I can only say that the BJP is being pseudo-Hindu.

What is sought to be proved by history is that all these years the Hindus have been wronged by the Muslims, and that the time has come for the Hindus to take revenge. And it is this revenge by the Hindus which is a reflection of the Hindu pride or the Hindu nation. Agreed, there is no doubt that most of our religious monuments have been defiled by invading Muslims. But the historical fact is that their attack on many of the temples was because the temples were the centres of wealth; today, if anybody were to attack, the first place they

would go to would be Tirupati—it churns out crores a day and could probably take care of our balance of payments crisis. The question today is, are we going to preserve this country as a modern state, a democratic state, a federal polity on the basis of a Hindu rashtra?

Jain: Are you going to preserve it by giving power to those very people who have created these problems? Yechuri: I am not "You must stop and circumscribe religion, except for the legitimate purpose for which it was originally invented. I think the BJP is the bastard product of this fundamentalism and it is disastrous."

"I'm willing to concede that if the Muslims had been the same number as the Hindus are, they would have declared it an Islamic state."

KHUSHWANT SINGH
Journalist



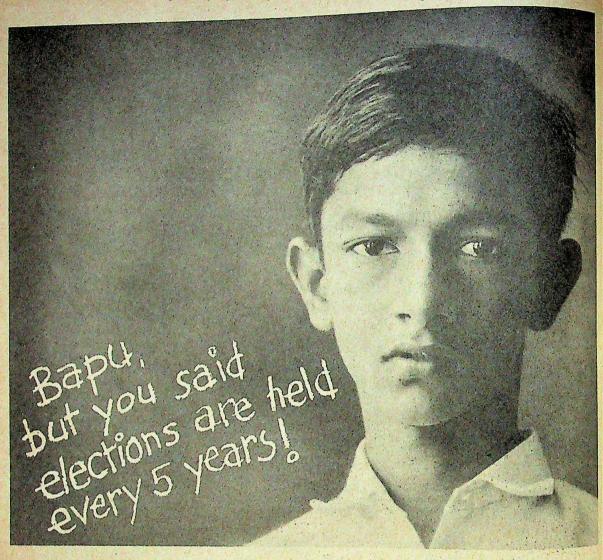
going to preserve it by giving power to some others who could possibly make it worse.

Dasgupta: After four decades of Independence, why have these issues come to the top? I agree with you when you say that the state should have no role in religion whatsoever. But the absence of any coherent nationalist point of view, of which the explosion of Punjab in 1984 is a manifestation, is a problem. We have seen secessionist ideology take definite roots in Kashmir, some evidence of it is coming in from Assam, all of which points out that the cementing bonds which kept India together are no longer valid. Against this, we have repeated examples of attempts being made one after the other to allow this nation of fragmented nationality to take shape. Therefore, the political project to create a durable form of nationalism has to be undertaken. And the political project involves the invocation of symbols and the cultural heritage. Savarkar too saw Hindutva not as something of an exclusive prerogative of the pandas of Varanasi or Hardwar. He saw it as an enduring political ideology whereby people for the first time feel a Hindu identity.

Nandy: You say we have to build up durable nationalism. I'm not so enamoured of nationalism. I think it is a totally borrowed concept and with the demise of the British empire that is also collapsing. And I am not very sorry about its collapse.

Dasgupta: This is a challenge against our existing identity as Indians. This entire resentment, this disquiet, has been nurtured on denials. Take Ramjanmabhoomi. Ever since this controversy erupted in 1986, take to date the number of appeals, invocations, etc. made to the VHP, to the so-called Hindu community, to abandon the claim on the temple. Which political party or responsible groups of politicians or eminent people in public life have devoted even one-tenth of that time to appeal to the Muslims to make this gesture?

Yechuri: We did, we did! Now, if for the purpose of strength, such a thing as an Indianhood is required, on what basis should such an Indianhood be created? This Indianhood cannot come on the basis of Hinduism. A united India can only be on the basis of its



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diversity, not on the basis of its uniformity and similarity.

Dasgupta: It has to be based on the shared commitment to an idea called India. I will give you the example of Punjab. The roots of separatism in Punjab come from the possible detachment which has been continuously taking place over a hundred years of the creation of a separate Sikh identity which is completely detached from the umbilical cord of Hinduism.

Yechuri: Indianhood has to be on the basis of commonality, and that cannot be only Hindu.

Jain: It is not that the Hindus are aggrieved. The Hindus have consolidated power. The BJP is an expression not of Hindu grievances but of Hindu confidence. But it is relevant in the north Indian context because the disruption of tradition and the vulgarisation of politics have taken place most there.

In all but name, India has been a Hindu rashtra since 1947. This is unpleasant from the Muslim point of view, a reality which they want to shirk from recognising. They allow themselves to be cheated again and again. In the name of preserving their minority status, they are not willing to assert their status as citizens. This is a funny situation. And what could be more stupid? I mean the Muslims are victims of their own stupidity. They are extraordinarily stupid people. I don't mind this going on record. To fight for a structure which has ceased to be a mosque!

Finally, I'll say that now the socalled Hindutva wave which you are witnessing is nothing more than clearing the ground for an alteration and modification of the system. Don't raise ghost spectres that don't exist. This debate in India is not going to be over. These Hindus are endlessly contentious fellows. They will go on debating, and the Muslims have nothing to fear. If the Muslims were clever they would have given away this ghost of a structure long ago and taken the earth from under the BJP. The BJP cannot be interested in the construction of a temple till they have consolidated their power sufficiently to have that confidence that they can do without it. Without the VHP the BJP would be nowhere. Yet I

ASHIS NANDY

Senior Fellow, Centre for Study of Developing Societies



"Most of our insights into the western concept of secularism, state and nationalism are derived from books, not from life."

"We have not opted for a melting pot. That is a bogus analogy imported from the US. Ours is more of a salad bowl.'

can tell you that other than the BJP no one can salvage the system. The Congress(I) can only mismanage. I am not saying that the BJP can get rid of corruption but at least as a new party in power it can make some beginning somewhere.

I don't see, for example, V.P.

Singh and the BJP as antagonistic forces. I personally believe that the minorities will be better protected because the BJP will be on the defensive and the BIP will not have the kind of excuses the Congress(I) has been able to produce.

Habeeb: I think it is hurting the feelings of the minorities. According to Islam, only God can protect them. You said India is a Hindu rashtra and now the reality has come out.

Jain: No, no, I speak with great care. I said you should be asserting your

rights as full citizens.

Habeeb: What do you mean by full citizens?

Jain: I'll tell you, don't claim rights as minorities.

Habib: Why was it written in the Constitution?

Jain: Jawed, I didn't write the Constitution. You know the difference between the BIP and the Congress? The Congress searched for a middle ground via the English language. This is what secularism means. You give up your ways, the Muslim gives up his ways and we meet somewhere in between. You give up your culture, I give up mine and let's meet and use English.

Ashis: Over a glass of whisky. Jain: Over a glass of whisky, not with Indian water. This BJP struggle, without its being aware of it, is as much against westernisation. But if there was a statesman among Muslims, he would negotiate with the BIP. He would ask: "What do you promise us?"

Habeeb: We have sent our manifesto to the BIP.

Jain: Tumhare bas ka nahin hai. Habib bhai, woh subtlety hai nahin tumhare andar (It is beyond you. You don't have the subtlety.)

Dasgupta: There can be only one solution, in my mind, to the

Ramjanmabhoomi issue, and it does not lie in the idealistic solution of Sitaram. It can only result in the construction of a temple, because if that is not done you are going to have Kashi, Mathura and 3,000 other localised disputes being opened. And once that Pandora's box is opened, we are heading for catastrophe. This must, however, be complemented by what we call a constitutional guarantee. This is an open offer which Advani has given. Irrespective of what the final outcome is, the force generated by the Ramjanmabhoomi campaign is not going to disappear, whether the BJP gets two seats or 250.

Jain: Swapan, you must remember that the Hindu was not given this sense of shame by the Muslim. He was given this sense of shame by the colonialists and their successors headed by Jawaharlal. You know, after Independence the man did not even put on a dhoti.

Dasgupta: He discarded his dhoti after Independence.

Nandy: We have failed because we, the modern Indians who defined

SITARAM YECHURI CPI(M) Politburo Member

"The struggle is between the basic tenets in our Constitution and communalism."



this nation of ours, have not provided an adequate critique of three elements of the modern state. The BIP has no critique of this, by the way, In fact, the BJP is a kind of semi-modern structure which borrows the idealogy of the modern state lock, stock and barrel. And the BJP is for Hindutva in every sense except three: its concept of state is totally modern, its concept of scientific temper and rationality is totally modern. and its concept of secularism is entirely modern. That is why the strongest abuse in the BJP vocabulary is

that you are a pseudosecularist. The implication is that I am a true secularist. I find it as comical as the secularism of the JNU variety. Now, in this crisis of nationalism there is no critique of scientific rationality which is growing all over the world, there is no critique of the nationstate. We have no sensitivity to the traditions of the states we had.

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Khushwant Singh: My solution is down-to-earth—it's not all that intellectual. We have allowed religion to go absolutely berserk. The Government has no business to enter into this business of encouraging religious teaching in schools. Right from the beginning you must stop and circumscribe religion, except for the legitimate purposes for which it was originally invented. I think the BIP is disastrous and is the bastard product of this fundamentalism. So are the Akalis. They are gaining support because they are catering to themost vulgar instincts in people: to score over other people. And with it goes a whole lot of false propaganda, particularly against the Muslims: that they are breeding too fast. They have four wives. You have as many Hindus with more than one wife. Karunanidhi has three, Raj Mangal Pandey has two or three. Then they say they are out-breeding us. What examples can you think of today? V.V. Giri had 11 children, Laloo Prasad Yadav has nine. The BJP or the Congress used Arun Govil dressed as Ram and Dara Singh dressed as Hanuman in electioneering. Now they read sermons to the Akalis and

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"The greatest misdeed that is being done to the country today is that culture is being straitjacketed with religion."

"If we are charged of being pseudo-secularist today, I can only say that the BJP is being pseudo-Hindu."

SITARAM YECHURI

to all the others.

It is the bounden duty of anyone secular to see the BJP defeated. I would also like to see the Akalis decimated. I would like to see the Muslim League defeated.

India is secular, Advani says, because of the Hindus. All right, I'm willing to concede that. If the Muslims had been the same number as the Hindus are, they would have declared it an Islamic state. But our pride is that we are a secular state, despite it being over 80 per cent Hindu. It is Hindus like Gandhi and Nehru who did it, not Hindus like these. They are fanatics, narrowminded, with no vision of the future of this country. Anyone who is anti-Muslim is their hero-Rana Pratap, Prithviraj Chauhan, Guru Gobind Singh, Shivaji, they all fought the Muslims. They are the national heroes. Well, there is obviously some distortion in our history. You have the Shivaji-Afzal Khan episode. Quite obviously, Shivaji behaved like a bastard, he murdered a man who was embracing him. Stories that he tried to plunge a dagger into Shivaji are all made up. We have to move away from all this.

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AVES YOU WITH NO CHOIC

DATING

## An Open Embrace

As the dating phenomenon spreads across the classes, old taboos are fading and public displays of intimacy are becoming common

By MADHU JAIN with M. RAHMAN

ULIET'S not up there in her balcony-impossibly desirable and out of reach. She's right here on terra firma, beside her beau: enjoying a canoodle in the parks, on the beaches, in cinema halls, under the water tanks of Bombay high-rises. Just anywhere.

Less than a decade ago, the middle class contented themselves with soulful, long distance glances. Couples trundling down snowy slopes to Kishore Kumar's music was the stuff dreams were made of. Some of that fantasy has now become flesh. Young people in the cities are dating at every level, especially the middle classes and lower income groups. The virtual apartheid between the two sexes in conservative families has begun to give way. A sexual glasnost is breezing through, sending young clerks, stenographers and receptionists out in pursuit of romance.

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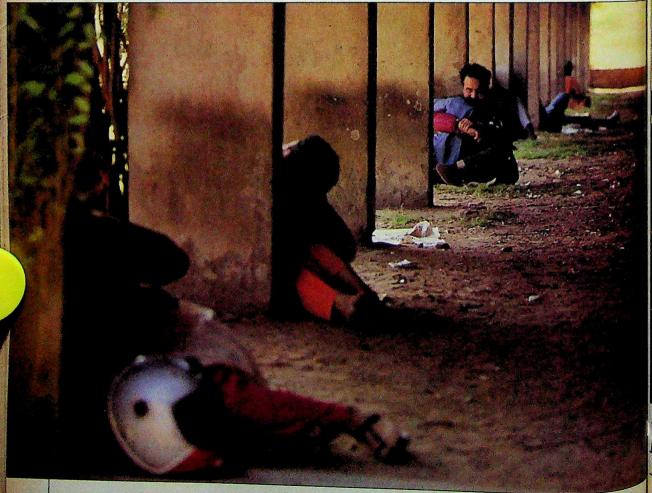
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But it's romance on the sly. Datinging still taboo for most lower middle class parents, although a few have become more flexible about the time the daughters return home. Romance or the sly has, ironically, had to go public You won't find young couples sitting it family living rooms sipping colas. Fur inotinit. tive twosomes crowd public beaches, gardener h

Dating has increasingly become a public affair and parks in the capital are dotted with a host of furtive twosomes lost in stolen moments of bliss.



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occupy back rows of cinema halls or sit long hours over ice-cream in fast food places. There were always such couples. But they were the exception to the rule really. Moreover, they'd blush and quickly disengage hands if caught. Today's lovers are not really embarrassed. Nor are the onlookers. Society now seems to accept dating as a new fact of life.

Bombay with its cosmopolitan character and large force of working women et the trend. But the rest of the country isquickly catching up. Ten years ago, a couple walking down hand in hand was y. Datingi lkespotting a rare bird. These days, they iddle class are as common as sparrows. A walk in ve become time the Delhi's Buddha Jayanti Park can bemance or come an obstacle race, stepping over couples in varying stages of intimacy. go public es sitting in There's literally one behind every bush, colas. Fur inotinit. Says Dhani Ram, who's been a c beaches gardener here for 17 years: "There are so

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many couples now that nobody even looks at them any more."

O wonder Gulshan Mehra, a 27year-old salesman who has been in love eight times in the last seven years, spends a lot of time in this rambling park where obliging chowkidars, for a Rs 20-tip, ensure privacy. His current paramour Shanti, 22, works as a stenographer. They met some months ago when she moved into one of the rooms his father rents out. Gulshan has a habit of falling in love with the tenants. His favourite haunts are the parks with their "thick, large bushes"-"I make love in them .... You can do anything there."

But romance can turn sour. Suddenly, policemen turn up. "You should always have about Rs 50," says Anand Chopra, a personal assistant in a government office. "If the cops don't get

Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

money, they threaten to tell the girl's parents. Or worse." If the young man has no clout or money, the police have on occasion beaten him up or humiliated the girl, he adds.

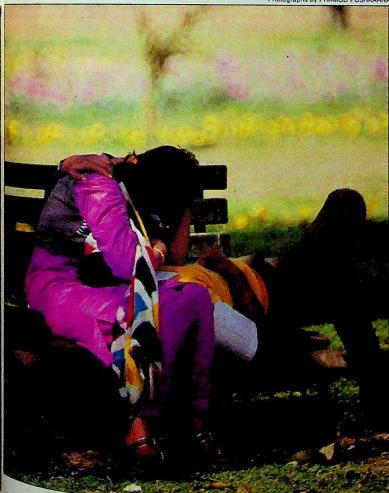
Dating has got more physical, far less moony. No longer are couples content with staring into each other's eyes over chaat or talking endlessly at bus stops. Dr D. Narayana Reddy, a consultant who also writes a column in the magazine Andhra Jyoti, gets many letters from young girls asking for contraceptive advice. One of them from Eluru, who had been educated in the city but now lives with her family in the village. expresses her frustration: "Men attract mealot. I feel inhibited here. I want to go and enjoy life. I too want a man.'

Romance seems to be fading even while dating is on the rise, according to counsellor Beena Shivpuri of Delhi's Marie Stopes Clinic. Young girls are looking for thrills because they are bored or in search of affection, she says. Many have working parents. Left alone at home, they want to escape their drab existence and mounting pressures at study or work. Rima Dey has been dating two men on the sly ever since she got a job with a small-time courier firm in Calcutta. Often, she picks up the tab on their outings, usually to the romantic Eden Gardens. "It is the only way I add colour to my life. My paltry salary can pay for no other entertainment," she says.

There's also peer pressure in schools and colleges. Many girls from these backgrounds now go to public schools-made possible by the advent of two-income families. "They like to imitate the upper classes," explains Dr Kusum Bhalla, a Delhi gynaecologist. Video is also a great leveller-there's now easy access to American films. Even Hindi films provide the inspiration and social sanction too.

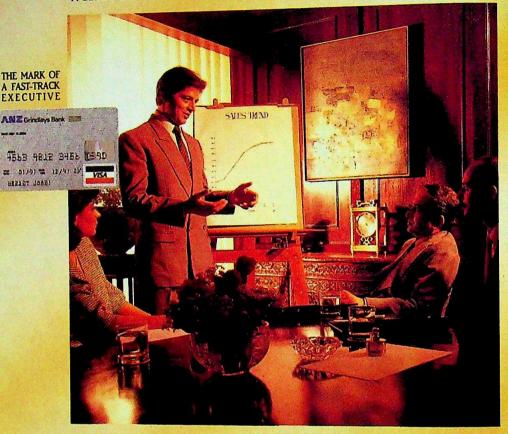
While students often bunk classes to go to the movies, the slightly older women disappear from work in the afternoons to secluded restaurants. The early evenings see middle-aged men with their secretaries, usually walking demurely, several feet behind them.

Young couples are swearing eternal love among the ruins in Delhi's Purana Ouila or Talkatora Gardens, Arches, half covered with foliage, frame a successive row of couples, lost in stolen moments of happiness. Under one is Meena, 24. She works in a beauty parlour and has taken a few hours off to meet her friend, a policeman. Her family doesn't know about her relationship. But she "dates" to bring some excitement into her work-



 $N^{0}$  longer are couples content staring into each other's eyes—dating has got more physical, far less moony.

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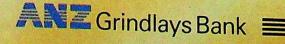
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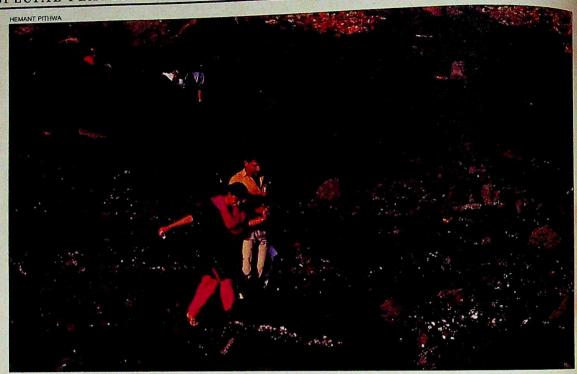
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In Bombay, the increasing crunch for space, has couples cuddling together not only in parks and beaches, but also under watertanks of high rise buildings.

bus-home-television routine.

Meena wouldn't dare bring her paramour home—"My father would throw me out." But in Bombay, from where the winds of change usually start, more young men come calling to pick up their dates. "My boy-friend comes home on Sundays. After three months of dating, I took him home as I wanted my parents to approve my choice," says Evonne, 25, a secretary with a publishing firm in Bombay.

Bombay has always been the daters' haven-lots of working, single men and women live alone in this bustling metro which is the breeding ground for trends from the West. Young couples holding hands have long been as much a part of the cityscape as bhelpuri. But now they've begun to feel the crunch of space. The beaches are getting as crowded as the city. Early evenings, the Bombay coastline, strewn with black, craggy rocks, is dotted with couples lost in their own world. The most visible evidence of the growing popularity of dating is the number of couples perched precariously as crabs at the Bandra Bandstand rocks. Juhu Beach and the Hanging Gardens also draw a large number of couples searching for a shared moment. A Bombay speciality

is the "tumbril romance"—first encounters in the queues in tenements where families have to share bathrooms. Even these are on the increase.

ANY girls are seeking relationships before marriage—preferring to defer marriage. But it is still clandestine. Why the sudden crush for courtship? The widespread phenomenon of dating in this social strata is a reflection of the changes in urban middle class society. The information explosion—more explicit films and TV programmes, video cassettes which range from powder blue porn to the real stuff, the emergence of kiss-and-tell magazines—is one of the catalysts for this new openness.

Helping things along is the telephone, the new instrument of middle class love. But the engine of change is undoubtedly the woman. Says Dr Mahinder C. Watsa, a consultant on sexuality programmes with the Family Planning Association of India: "Urban women are playing a big part in changing traditional sexuality." There was a time when good girls didn't work. But today, "there is a social sanction for young girls to bring home money," says Kiran Bhatia, founder of counselling centres, Sanjivini and Sumetri.

With the leap in the number of working women, the citadels of tradition are crumbling. Economic freedom has brought with it other kinds of freedom—and opportunity. Work-ties lead to love-ties. Work also provides an alibi for being out of the house.

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Usually, economic hardship or the inability of parents to arrange marriages, compels girls to date in the hope of finding husbands. "Often parents give a go-ahead to their daughter due to the menace of dowry," says Ushaben Kanahare, a sociologist at Gujarat University. The hunt for a husband is the main reason for lower middle class girls venturing out on dates. Prabah Trivedi, 23, a laboratory technician in Ahmedabad, regularly goes out with Ramesh, a clerk she mel during the Navaratri fair last year. Though her parents are not happy about the "match" as Ramesh is not a Brahmin, they had to acquiesce as they have two other daughters to marry.

Clearly, dating has come to stay as a middle class phenomenon. Cupid is now increasingly busy as permissive ness elbows aside tradition and fathers forget to lock up their daughters.

Names have been changed to protect the identity of the persons.

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#### REVERSAL OF FOR-TUNE (Jeremy Irons and

Glenn Close) Based on the true story of Claus Von Bulow who was sent to death row for the sensational murder of his wife, the movie fetched Irons an Oscar for Best Actor.

MUMBAI (Ila Pal, Jehangir Art Gallery, Bombay) All the way from Chowpatty to Shivaji Park, the brazen

crudity, heart-stopping chaos and stupefying craziness of Bombay's hyperbole-inviting metropolitan life are gutsily, and without much tearfulness, depicted in these acrylics-on-canvas, watercolours and mixed-media presentations. Wellknown painter Ila Pal, never faint at heart, as eagle-eyed and tenacious as the best biographer of urban dementia, is at her existentialist and visual best, whether capturing the special, elusive, post-feminist quality of Bombay's famous ghat women workers or the harsh but pathetically transient alertness of its ageing sharebrokers, the hominids who haunt Dalal Street.



Pal's painting: depicting Bombay

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

THREE WOMEN ARTISTS FROM PAKISTAN (Nahid

Raza, Nazish Ataullah, Salima Hashmi, Centre for Contemporary Arts, New Delhi) Nahid Raza's expressionist Woman Series is acrylic on hand-made paper, dominated by burning

reds and grumpy crimsons. In her Shrouded Form series. Nazish Ataullah uses a conch shell as a predominant image. Her acrylics and aqua tints are cryptic. And Salima Hashmi's works with charcoal and pigment on rag paper do not pretend to be spontaneous. The pane effect-

paintings broken up into The Pak trio: creative renderings grids-lends cerebral

touch heightened by a wintry effect—greys, blacks, offset by startling dabs of red, green, blue and once, a sunset pink.

THE SECRET GROUND (Edward Durdey, Pundole Art Gallery, Bombay) Young British painter Durdey's travels



through exotic and lush India, China and southeast Asia, and his interest in Jungian mysticism, are reflected in this unusual show of paintings, monoprints and bas reliefs. He transforms everyday objects and symbols into images which provide intimations of another reality. The spiritual quest is obviously of primary significance.

> Durdey's painting: mystic quality



RABBIT REST (John Updike, Pa guin, Rs 90) The saga Harry Angstrom is laid rest, and post-war America stands chronicled in peerles fashion. Updike's prose is its sensuous best, and it fitting that the last book the Rabbit tetralogy ha been awarded the Pulitzer

POSSESSION (A.S. Byat Vintage, Rs 150) Victoria poetry, literary mystery and deep romance—this Book Prize winner is erudite fiction at its best.

MOON PALACE (Pal ensible fin Auster, Faber & Faber Rs 145) This is an excellent als. novel, ingeniously constructed. Read alongside useful ber usband's acclaimed The New York Tril qual. ogy, it heralds Auster as writer of the very first rank



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(scripted by Mahesh Bhat starring Dimple Kapadi ell-develop and Anupam Kher) Mahes Jount of Bhatt is getting increasing piler



Dimple: bruised wife

difficult to stomach. movie, in which Dimpl the much-bruised wife politic self-serving (Anupam Kher), is the of the kind made by M passing off as sympathi of the feminist cause. Bl is a poseur and the m doesn't do his credible any good.

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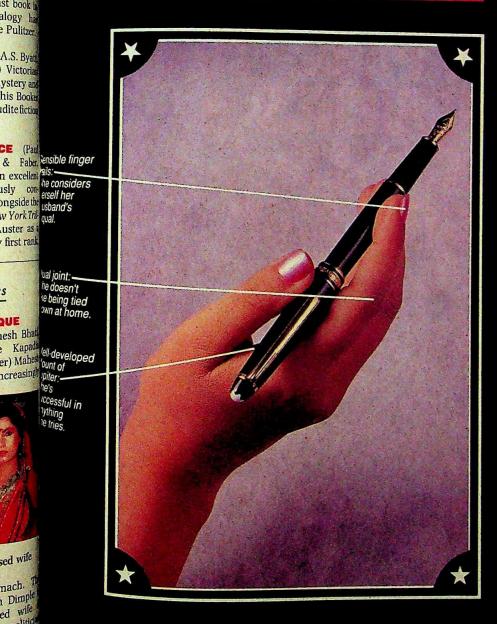


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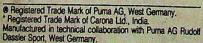


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UGANDA

#### A Change of Heart

Indians are wooed back to save a sick economy

Na remarkable U-turn in policy, a repentant Uganda is urging people of Indian origin it expelled nearly 20 years ago to return and rebuild a shattered economy. Their properties and businesses, confiscated by former dictator Idi Amin, are being restored to them. And Asians are taking the change seriously and beginning to return, at least to invest if not settle back in the country where they first made their fortunes.

Around 1,400 families have already filed claims for the return of 7,000 properties worth Rs 194 crore. The 110-odd properties returned include sugar mills to the Madhvanis, a powerful family in Africa, and tea estates and a saw mill to

the relations of Shekhar Mehta, the East African rally driver.

The present Ugandan Government is admitting that the country cannot do without Asian business expertise and that a grave error was committed when Idi Amin expelled 60,000 Indians in 1972. Since then the infrastructure of a once flourishing economy has been virtually ruined. Unemployment is rife. The inflation rate was nudging 200 per cent by the end of the '80s.

Epitomising the changed scenario, Nazmu Virani, one of Britain's most prominent Ugandan Indian captains of industry, is to lead a high-powered British trade delegation to Kampala. Virani, who had to escape emptyhanded from Uganda, is ready to let bygones be bygones. He, however, clarified that he would not resettle in Uganda but he would help the country by investing and encouraging others to do the same. "We would definitely like to help the country where we were born and brought up."

born and brought up."

The members of Virani's delegation, who include decision makers from Wimpey. Bovis and Unilever, were due to meet Ugandan President Yowerl Museveni in Kampala. Since he

hoes.



Museveni (inset); Indians driven out of Uganda by Amin: vital about-turn

came to power in 1986. Museveni has won admiration for his efforts to bring back peace and security to the country, and for upholding human rights.

Said Uganda's High Commissioner



"We would definitely like to help the country where we were born."

in London George Kirya: "It is easier to destroy, but it takes a long time to rebuild." He especially welcomed those entrepreneurs who could help revitalise priority areas like

tourism, dairy farming, textiles and agriculture, and said Virani's trip was crucial to the recovery of Uganda's economy.

Appealing to the Insentiment, Kirya said: "There are people who despite being so many years out of Uganda have their minds and hearts in Uganda." He's right. In hundreds of Ugandan Asian homes in Britain, the aged still pore over sepia-tinted photographs of happy days in the sun. Today many will wish to explore the possibility of restarting businesses in Uganda.

But they are cautious about prospects. Said Sabdu Walji, whose family owned a 16,000-acre

ranch in Uganda before expulsion: "People now want to go for quick money, Before we thought the country belonged to us and went for long-term investment. Now that old trust is broken." Arunbhai Patel, a financial consultant in London, warned: "No business can exist in a vacuum—and all the Indian clerks, accountants and solicitors are gone."

Besides there are riders to the invitation. Those who have their properties returned will not be able to resell them for five years, nor remain absentee landlords. However, appointing somebody to run a business while the owner stays on in Britain will suffice.

Yet London lawyer Mumtaz Kassam, from Virani's delegation, had plans to spend most of the year in Uganda. She is laying claim to 45 properties, worth Rs 10 crore, on behalf of three families. She has already been back to look at one of her family's farms, where she was warmly welcomed by the Ugandan workers. "They picked guavas for me. They said, 'this is your farm; come back'." Kassam intends to do just that as she cannot get Africa out of her system. And so may many other Indians like her. —AMIT ROY in London

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#### Date with Destiny

#### The nation is knocking at democracy's door

OR the people of Nepal, the much longed-for dawn of democracy has brought disillusionment in its wake. Newly-created political parties trade insults, hitherto-suppressed social conflicts spread like a rash, law and order totters and prices escalate. Even the vote can be a bit of a headache. After 32 years of obedience to a monarch, people have to contend with 40 parties jostling on the political stage.

The elections on May 12 are the first free elections in 32 years. Last year's revolt which overthrew the monarchy and inaugurated a new Constitution will now express the popular will through the ballot box. Excitement is mixed with anxiety over inflation, and an uncertain future.

There is already fear about possible Violence. Virtually all the parties are claiming that professional troublemakers will be hired from across the border to rig the elections. The rural Populace is another imponderable. In a country with a mere 30 per cent literacy rate, will they rise to the occasion? Kusum Devkota, a book-Seller in Kathmandu, comments: "In a poor and illiterate country like ours, the level of political consciousness outside the valley is very low. It will take time to understand democracy."

In the meantime, they have to figure out what the various parties stand for. The two factions of the National Democratic Party led by Surya Bahadur Thapa and Lokendra Bahadur Chand are regarded as propalace. Their leaders and supporters are beneficiaries of the panchayat system and have struck deep roots. It would therefore be foolish to dismiss them as a relic of the ancien regime.

Their main target is the coalition government led by Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai that has the CPN(UML) as a partner and is being blamed for the country's economic ills. The leftist parties, true to form, are violently anti-monarchist.

Despite the plethora of parties, there are only five real contendersthe Nepali Congress, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist and Leninist (CPN (UML)), the National Democratic Party (NDP(T), the Democratic Party (NDP(C) and the regional Sadhbhavana Party. The battle royale will be between the Nepali Congress and the CPN(UML).

The Nepali Congress is predictably posing as the patron saint of the prodemocracy movement and asking the

Nepali Congress: garnering support

people to place their faith in its ability to steer the country towards democratic development. Along with the other parties, it is directing its rhetoric at the young. The voting age was lowered from 21 to 18. The cool air of the mountains is thick with promises of free education up to secondary level and fresh opportunities for the young who, the politicians know, are impatient for rapid change. Many young people have thrown their weight behind the communists whose slogans of revolution and a new order for the poor and deprived have fired them with enthusiasm. Such support would have provided a good launching-pad for the communist movement, if it hadn't splintered into nearly a dozen groups.

The CPN(UML) is way above the rest. It is promising land for the landless, equality, social justice, and-just a trifle ambitiously-the creation of a welfare state. The rhetoric is resounding but voters don't like being confused and tend to become irritated with bickering parties, particularly when they belong to the same family.

One shrill voice stands out among the glib, soothing promises of prosperity, stability and justice being held out by the main protagonists. It comes from the plains of Terai where the Sadhbhavana Party says it is high time that the people of the region were paid some attention. Its rhetoric occasionally lapses into demands for a separate province for Nepalese of Indian origin.

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This stirred the Nepali Congress into making a manifesto statement that no community in Nepal would be discriminated against under its rule.

The question of India was bound to rear its head in the election. The communists have accused the Nepali Congress of being India's stooge, ready to sell out at the first opportunity. In fact, all the Nepali Congress has said is that it is keen to improve Nepal's relations with India but in the hysterical hype of elections the communists denounced this as subservi-

ence. Thus, a communist leader asks: "Why should we be close to India only? We do not want to lose our identity by tilting towards India.'

The leftists are adamant about India. If they come to power, they intend to tear up any "unequal treaties" between the two countries that they might find stored away in government files. If any party shows any bias towards India, it is the Sadhbhavana Party. It not only wants a "special relationship" with India but even suggests a common currency.

For the Nepalese, these first elections are crucial. History is being made



The communists: idealistic spirit

and the result will determine the main contours of their new political state for some time to come. At the very least, the result will lay the foundations for democratic institutions and new political norms. A more immediate blot on the horizon which is ringing alarm bells inside the parties is the prospect of a hung Parliament. Mentally, most politicians are already thinking in terms of coalition adjustments although, naturally, none of them would ever dream of articulating such

thoughts in public.

Even as a democratic future beckons, the dead weight of the past-all 32 years of it-can still haunt people. Says Madhav Kumar Nepal, a CPN(UML) politburo member: "It is imperative that we consolidate democracy. Otherwise we will regress into another autocratic system." P.L. Singh, a former spokesman of the pro-democracy movement, strikes an even more ominous tone: "If events take a turn which pushes us back into monarchy, there will be a lot of bloodshed.'

-RAMESH MENON in Kathmandu

K.P. BHATTARAI

Co.

#### "The King is Cooperative"

NEPAL'S Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, 66, works a punishing 17-hour day. It's a regimen that takes its toll on his lean frame, battered by spells in prison over decades. His overriding priority, he tells Principal Correspondent RAMESH MENON, is to make Nepal safe for democracy.

On campaigning for Nepali Congress

Initially there were wrangles over tickets among people who had suffered all these years and wanted to be rehabilitated. Many of them had lost out economically because of their political work. We had only 205 seats and over 1,000 aspirants. But things have been sorted out.

On fighting the communists



The communists were collaborators in the panchayat system and this will be held against them. They do have a powerful ideology but our policies on land reforms, education and foreign policy are clearer.

On being pro-India

The blockade last year should have taught us that it is in our interests to have friendly relations with India. It is a pragmatic policy to ensure that bitterness between the two countries does not arise.

On palace interference

I meet the king every week. The palace is very cooperative. It's unfair to drag it into conspiracy theories.

On rising prices and growing disorder

It needs to be improved. Try to understand how people react after being bottled up for over 30 years. They have high expectations. Prices were beyond our control but we

will get around it.

On the administration getting slack

The Government is the largest employer and the norm now is to please the boss and not work. In a democratic society everyone has to realise his duties. Creating discipline in such a massive system takes time.

On coming back to power

I want peace. This is a very hectic job. Being the prime minister of Nepal is not easy.

CRICKET

#### **Running Amuck**

#### Placid pitches, quirky rules stump domestic cricket

CORE 1,000 runs for no loss in 250 overs. But let your rival notch up 121 for 9 in 30 overs in a five-day match. Believe it or not, you've lost the match. This just isn't cricket, you might say. But this is how cricket--and first class cricket-is being played in the country now. The result is obvious: falling standards and diminishing crowds in domestic cricket.

This is not all, A combination of mismanagement, irrational rules, bad pitches and official apathy has reduced domestic cricket to a stage where there is more action off the field than on it. Last fortnight the nasty and unnecessary court battle between the Delhi District Cricket Association (DDCA) and the Puniab Cricket Association over a pre-quarter final match came to an end but Raman Lamba went to court to appeal against a 10-month ban on him for being involved in a fracas with Rashid Patil (banned for 13 months) in a Duleep Trophy match. This season, courts were asked to adjudicate three times in national cricket, apart from other protests lodged with the BCCI.

"Cricket in India has to be played

with a calculator", says Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi about the quagmire of rules periodically altered by the technical committee. In fact a captain has to spend much time agonising over the quotient rule, the penalty rule and the timings (see box) instead of marshalling his forces and getting on with the game.

#### STUNNING SCORES

- Karnataka 791 for 6 vs Bengal
- Bengal 758 for 7 vs Tripura
- West Zone 747 vs South Zone
- Rest of India 737 for 9 vs Bengal
- Bombay 719 for 8 vs Delhi
- Karnataka 716 for 6 vs Tamil Nadu
- Bengal 652 for 9 vs Karnataka

Highest scorers: V. Arjun Raja 267, Srikant Kalyani 260, K.A. Jeshwant 259, D. Vengsarkar 258, Praveen Amre 246, Saba Karim 234, R. Shastri 217.

(All scores of 1990-91 season)

Perhaps the most appalling rule is the lifer cry from run penalty for each over less than the once all ou penalty run 90 stipulated for a day's play.

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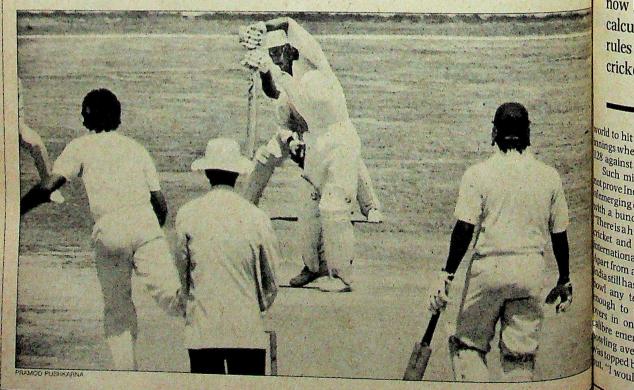
sores ove

With such yawning anomalies in by Wisden rules it is no wonder that the domes ours from I circuit is devoid of interest either players or spectators and has become formality. No talent has been uncarthed for quite some time from the domest marvellous circuit—even Tendulkar, a product of Bombay's exe lent school cricket system, played h matches. N first Irani Trophy only this season and sich scores in fact the few promising players have gason. Am perished or have been rotting in the was Himac circuit. Such is the apathy to domest becoming cricket that this season five matchran into trouble because umpire never reported.

BCCI President Madhavrao Scind sees nothing wrong in making rules suit the changing patterns of the game. "The new rules have to be trie out for a couple of seasons. They have been framed by experts after deliberate ing for a year. It is a bad principlet chip-chop rules often," he says.

It is not that ad hoc rules alon have ruined the fun in the game. Muc of domestic cricket is played on sul standard pitches where batsmen mal merry and bowlers dig their grave This season has seen a series of ama ing high-scoring matches (see table)

> Ajay Sharma bats in Delhi's quarter final against Bombay



158 INDIA TODAY • MAY 15 1991

ule is the lar cry from the days when Kerala was ss than the once all out for 33 runs. Interestingly, penalty runs in India are not recognised omalies Wisden which has deleted penalty te domest ans from Tamil Nadu's score of 912 for t either dalastseason against Goa in its records.

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unearth THIS season there have been six scores above 700, 14 scores over e domesti 600, and 36 times there have been bay's exect sores over 500 in 70 first class Sachi played h matches. Nowhere in the world have ason—an gch scores been piled up in a domestic ayers have gason. Among the various highlights ting in the was Himachal Pradesh's Shakti Singh to domest becoming the tenth batsman in the

be dug up and hard and bouncy wickets made," Dilip Vengsarkar commented.

One reason is that few grounds have covers apart from tarpaulin and there are no more groundsmen around who can transform pitches into marvels. But bowlers have still shown spurts of fiery bowling. Ashish Winston Zaidi, Uttar Pradesh's opening bowler took 14 wickets against Haryana, Bengal's talented all-rounder Sauvrav Ganguly impressed with his medium-pace. Karnataka's 21-year-old medium pacer J. Srinath took seven wickets against Maharashtra and Orissa's Sushil Kumar. 15 wickets against Tripura.

The rise in popularity of the one-day game has also resulted in the players' emphasis on attaining batting prowess. Some of the leading young bowlers now are also concentrating on batting. For instance, spinner Anil Kumble who got a century for Karnataka, J. Srinath and Bengal's Sauvrav Ganguly might end up as run-of-the-mill all-rounders if this trend continues. Not for modern-day bowlers the drudgery and determination of plugging away at a lone stump in a lonely corner of dusty maidans like Venkataraghavan or Chandrashekhar.

While the archetypal Indian sport administrator has ruined the once enjoyable game with his ad hoc and weird rules, he has also resorted to legalese to drag cricket to the courtrooms. When the DDCA asked an all-Indian panel umpire Pritam Sood to stand in for an umpire who did not turn up for Delhi's match against Punjab on February 12, Bishan Singh Bedi who is apparently Punjab's cricket manager objected. An unqualified umpire was made to umpire till lunch with Venkataraghavan. After lunch Sood was anyway brought in. Much after Delhi won the match by nine wickets Punjab dug out the rule which says that umpires shall not be changed during a match. Delhi was disqualified, later a rematch was ordered, but Punjab went to court and stayed the rematch and after the whole tournament was delayed by two months Punjab withdrew the case and pulled out.

'Rules themselves create bottlenecks," says Manmohan Sood, DDCA secretary, who feels that Punjab was trying to win in court what they couldn't on the field. "It is not correct for state associations to lodge protests or to go to court to win matches," says Scindia. Preventive measures thought of by the BCCI include imposing a stiff non-refundable deposit of say Rs 25,000 against the present rate of Rs 1,500, to lodge a protest.

Many leading cricketers and administrators feel that sponsorships should help. Schemes include one by the BCCI and Dev Features to get each team sponsored and to bring in a twotier system keeping the top 10 in one group and the rest 17 in another. According to Scindia, weaker teams can thus get to play more matches and then qualify for the top league. The initial investment will be about Rs 2.5 crore. If no drastic solutions like this are worked out domestic cricket will remain a statistician's playfield.

-BINOO K. JOHN



he new rules have to be tried out for a couple of seasons. It is a bad principle to chip-chop rules often. They have been framed by an expert committee."

Uricket in the country now has to be played with a calculator. Most of the new rules have made domestic cricket artificial."



KHAN PATAUDI

orld to hit more than 12 sixes in an unings when he blasted 14 sixes in his 128 against Haryana.

Such mind-boggling hitting does Otprove Indian cricket is on the verge demerging on the international scene That bunch of incredible batsmen. There is a huge gap between domestic dicket and the game played at the played all level," says Pataudi. hart from a clearly fading Kapil Dev. ndiastill has no reliable bowler to help any team out twice. But just hough to bowl out the stipulated fers in one-dayers. No bowlers of bline emerged and even Bombay's wing average this season till now atopped by batsman Lalchand Rajan Mpped by batsman Laichand. Would suggest that all pitches

#### THIS ISN'T CRICKET

- Quotient rule: Bengal (652 for 9) defeated Karnataka (791 for 6) as their quotient-overs divided by runswas higher.
- Penalty runs: Hyderabad set to score 255 against Andhra Pradesh won by scoring just 150 for 7 and adding 120 penalty runs as Andhra bowled 10 overs less than the quota.
- Bonus points: After a first innings lead, Andhra Pradesh did not bat again hoping to grab Kerala wickets for bonus points (one per wicket) but Kerala won scoring 75 in 13 overs.

-Statistics by MOHANDAS MENON

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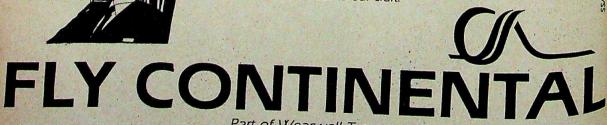
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#### Rewriting the Record

#### An IAS officer finds the Guinness entry fallacious

FTER a running argument with The Guinness Book of World Records; Hyderabad's G. Hanu-. mantha Reddy, a retired IAS officer, has proved that the publishers of the much revered compendium are not infallible. He had staked his claim for "the longest contested law suit" but that distinction in the Guinness Book had already gone to a litigation, also in

India, that supposedly went on for an amazing 761 years. So a spirited Reddy did a bit of sleuthing to unearth evidence that the record was fallacious. He also revealed that the book researchers had relied heavily on "sensationalised disinformation".

First, the 68-year-old Reddy's claim. He had battled with the Government for 44 years, nine months and 81 days from April 12, 1945 to January 20, 1990 in a chain of cases to contest an order overlooking his seniority. He also moved the court

24 times. Finally, he retired as deputy secretary, but nine years later, after his triumph, he was deemed to have retired as secretary to provide him a higher pension.

Now the Guinness claim. "The longest contested law suit ever recorded ended in Pune, India, on April 28, 1966 when Balasaheb Patloji Thorat received a favourable judgenent on a suit filed by his ancestor Majoji Thorat 761 years ago in 1205." This is the excerpt from the book that Was sent to Reddy in April 1989 in tesponse to his submission.

Undaunted, like many a record hunter, Reddy wrote a second time to Scholar Book's Deputy Editor Mcholas Heath-Brown that his case be considered as "a record in the history of Givil Service litigation anywhere in the norld, because the normal period of active service of a civil servant is only 30 to 35 years. Moreover, it is not the tone thing or common for civil sertanks, at least in the upper rungs, to duggest their master—the Government-whatever the injustice.

The Guinness editors were unimpressed. They suggested Reddy try The Limca Book of Records. The Indian publication lapped it up. But Reddy was not satisfied. So, in December last, Reddy made a fresh appeal for an entry. raising doubts about the Thorat case having continued for more than seven centuries at a stretch.

GUIMMESS

Keddy's battle over seniority with the Government that lasted almost 45 years might replace the old Guinness entry.

Predictably, Guinness played safe. Heath-Brown sent Reddy a clipping from The Times of India of April 29, 1966 headlined "Suit won after 761 years". and suggested he research into it. Reddy got in touch with lawyers in Bombay and judges in Pune to get a copy of the 1966 court order. But they told him it would be a wild-goose chase unless the names of the rival contestants and registration number of the suit was known. Unfazed, Reddy took a train to Pune to do the rounds of the

courts personally before he traced out a copy of the 25-year-old judgement.

The 36-page verdict of Judge J.E. Sanjana clearly reveals that the civil suit was filed on April 8, 1964 and decided on April 28, 1966-thus lasting a mere two years. The point at issue was the rights of presiding over public functions and precedence at religious functions in Hingangaon village of Pune district. Ruling in Thorat's favour, Judge Sanjana observed: "This decision hereby ends a dispute between the parties, the seeds of which were sown as far back as 750 years and over." "The seeds" referred to in the verdict is a mahajar or sanad issued in 1205 and called the manpan rights

granting and recognising the privileges given to Thorat's forefathers.

Argues Reddy: "It is evident that no suit was filed in 1205 as stated in the Guinness Book. A journalistic twist to the seeds of dispute mentioned in the judgement sensationalised a simple case. How can anyone fight a case for seven centuries through 28 generations of successors?

If the initial date of documents and creation of civil rights or prescriptive rights were taken as the beginning and not the date of filing the suit, then

there will be tens of thousands of cases that go back a millenium because such sanads go back several centuries. But Reddy puts it in perspective: "The age of a right does not represent the age of the dispute and the age of the dispute does not represent the age of the litigation and the age of the litigation does not represent the age of a particular civil suit.'

Clearly, the Thorat case cannot be considered the oldest suit. Says Reddy: "My research questions the authenticity of the entries in the Guinness Book which otherwise enjoys worldwide credibility." But will Thorat's loss be Reddy's gain? Reddy is still not sure about finding a place in the book. Says he: "Maybe I will qualify for the longest unsuccessful correspondence with the publishers for an entry in the Guinness Book." And he is not being funny, Record hunters are eccentric and dogged enough to conjure ingenious ways to get their names into the Bible of records.

-AMARNATH K. MENON

AMITABH BACHCHAN

#### **Feeling Good Again**

#### Charm and candour—the superstar's new persona

"This whole country prayed for my life in 1982 when I was nearly dying in hospital. And now they fling shoes at me."

-Amitabh Bachchan, INDIA TODAY, April 30, 1987

ACHCHAN has kissed and made up with the nation. They're now Illinging chummas at him—and awards. And the star can hear the applause again, Applause which had become as distant as a failing heartbeat.

It's a new Bachchan, A Bachchan who's feeling good-the celluloid paradise lost now regained, those accusing fingers regrouping into a salute. He is even looking good-the crowfeet add more expression to his face than years, the skin has shed its leathery pallor. "It's a recession period for me," he says, referring to myasthenia gravis, the illness which he feels is killing him slowly.

Quite unlike the wounded tiger who hastily left Parliament without even a good exit line. Quite unlike the silent sufferer after the guns of Bofors looked him in the eye. Quite unlike the fallen star who stoically turned the other cheek after the box-office failures of his films post-political interlude Jadugar, Toofan and Main Azad Hoon pushed him to the edge of the limelight.

But post-Bofors, post-Hum and now, post-national award-the first in two decades of acting-and post a lot else, including a public pat on the back from Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, Bachchan is back in the glare of those heady lights and snug at the top.

Like Popeye after he's flung that can of spinach into his mouth, the lanky star has taken on everybody this past year: the courts, the film trade journals (they are still smarting after the fax wars when he wrote to Film World to "shut up" after they claimed that Hum's boxoffice success figures were cooked up), and the press. But he's also being more charming. In fact, from the courted one, he's turned courtier. Nothing now comes between Bachchan and the press, hardly even his secretary. The new Bachchan likes to confirm interviews himself. "A journalist recently asked me why I talk to each journalist and fix up appointments. But I like to conduct my affairs personally. This way the interview has already started. Secretaries

can be rude. And people can come with an already hostile mind .... They might think I'm rude, arrogant, aloof. My films don't help, they show me as rough."

He even smiles readily now, his grin lighting up those famous anger-lined eyes which earlier could only smoulder like dry ice on the screen. And look who's talking now. Everywhere, all the time. A Bachchan interview has become common place. For someone who turned his back to the press in anger during the Emergency and kept it thus for 15 years, Bachchan's got a lot of silence to make up for. With a vengeance. He realises his ban on the press didn't affect his films: those 15 years saw him zoom and stay at the top, "When I joined politics I thought it would be the same, it wouldn't affect the product. But it did. Had I talked to the media, the attack would not have been so bad."

Today, he actually enjoys talking. It is almost like therapy for him. "I must admit talking to the press has been a great reformation.... It was all in the mind, but I am able to express myself confidently. Sometimes, we shut certain parts of our experiences and inner life. But when the media asks questions I never dreamed of or reflected on, it gets me thinking. I'm now more relaxed, more able to talk. To answer a query and not keep it within me is a release of energy. I was all bottled up.'

The uncorking has helped in other ways. Behind those high gates of his house, Bachchan is also a changed person. Less "irritable". More down to earth. More family man. "I find mundane things like domestic chores easier. I conduct myself at home differently. I am able to deal with things properly." Which means: he now takes an interest in the garden, the communication system in the house, the layout of the furniture, the way the staff should be dressed, how they should answer the phone, the condition of the car.

The lone ranger of the screen hasn't quite donned an apron though. Nor does car grease spoil those long piano fingers. But he has become more obsessive about his very private domain, a room with a lap-top computer, a fax machine and his music. "I love these gadgets. The room is messy and bothers Jaya (his wife) because I don't allow anyone to clean up.

Nobody can remove even a paper."1 family's allowed, but when invited.

Of late, he's been tinkering what hican be music. When not on his synthess Pring Bach making music, he's recording it. Hel a new interest: filling the many to phones in his house with what settes, mor imaginatively calls, "incidental must be rening o The Bachchan house has come at the ones at with all kinds of music. Suddenly, the Beat the Beat are early morning sounds like halofthe tweeting. From another corner, gush of a waterfall fills the room. Des my so sounds from one end, mountain sounds from one end, mountain sounds, from elsewhere. Bachchan will have screen music wherever he goes. Chopin on has a piano is likely to greet callers these distribution in He even had a new African beat of And when Tinnu Anand called his son, heard it, he jokingly asked him total his son, off in case Bappi Lahiri "called alein sch swiped it".

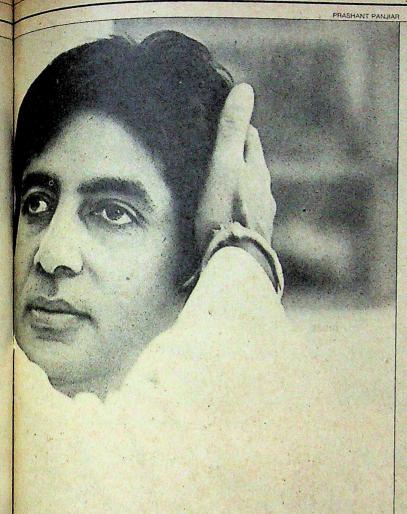
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lalking to the press has been a great reformation. To answer a query and not keep it within me is a release of energy.

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Amitabh: happy days again

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he African beat continues to set his feet <sup>apping</sup> Bachchan's interest in Indian ssical music, especially instrumental, as keen. "I play the Music Today settes, morning ragas in the morn-Levening ones in the evening and the th ones at night." Nor has he deand the Beatles. "When there was a Stradill Beatles, my children were ided I knew the songs. 'How do you my son asked in surprise. I said, houddy, I've been through it all." On screen, the Bachchan persona

has a family—domesticity does 80 down well with the screen mes-But off screen, Bachchan is inhis and Particularly. bis son Abhishek. Both the chil-Adein School in Switzerland but he Some often. "Once late at night, I d my son. I'd been working all day heelegal cases and was exhausted. s of Jum See legal cases and was exhausted. I up the hold was exhausted me why I was up so late. I group was exhausted. He replied, 'that's paris. Whereast Dad, keep fighting."

The son's literally wearing his shoes. So, it's more buddy-buddy. "When your son wears your shoes, he's no longer your son but your friend. He confides in me as a friend. Not those letters saving I did this and this. He talks about life, relationships, feelings, about how he's conducting himself."

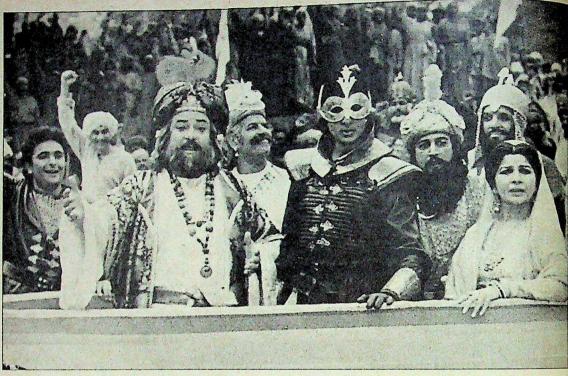
THE celluloid world is still Bachchan's oyster. But he's a bit confused. Will it be Bachchan the actor after the laurels for Agneepath or Bachchan the star after the appreciative whistles for his energetic hip-swivelling Jumma number. Bachchan himself would say both, or marry the two. But he's at the crossroads: after he finishes shooting his last film Khuda Gawah in July, he wants to "go somewhere and be by myself and figure out what to do". The choices: strong character roles like Agneepath or playing his age-"lots of people like me with a little bit of grey, as in the latter part of Hum". There's already a shift within the formula. In Khuda Gawah, he plays Sridevi's father

for a large chunk of the film, in Inderjit, he's Neelam's big brother, in Akela, he plays a policeman past his prime-"similar to what's happening in real life". Perhaps, he'll toss a coin. But, as he says, "nobody knows better than I what my system can do". Myasthenia gravis can trip him anytime: "Sometimes, you are suddenly unable to purse your lips and the water just flows out of the mouth. Or, you are combing your hair and the hand suddenly falls. Or, you are climbing stairs quite normally and after the sixth one, you just can't go on.'

Nevertheless, the new Bachchan's not fazed. Not even if his nemesis, V.P. Singh, returns. "I haven't exactly had a natural graph. In 50 years I've done more than others do in 150 years.

Meanwhile, Bachchan's on to a celebration of life. The vegetarian days are over. It's now, "a little bit of wine, a little bit of meat and a little bit of cigar". In other words, growing old gracefully, the best is yet to be.

-MADHU JAIN



AIOOBA

#### **Fantastic Fare**

#### Kapoor concocts a cocktail of myth and magic

MASHI Kapoor's emerged in his new avatar. All that's missing is a wand, a cape and a top-hat full of rabbits. Take any fairy-tale and there it is-gily-gily-in his miracle-a-minute, fun-laden film, Ajooba. Fantasy fills this Indo-Soviet venture which has all the Kapoor exuberance, though it takes you for a bit of a ride. But once the willing suspension of disbelief is in place, it should appeal to children and to the child-in-man.

Shashi isn't staking a claim to big

brother Raj's mantle in his directorial debut-"I can't ever step into his shoes. He was a great film maker." But traces of the showman are there. The Soviet dalliance. The beliefin entertainment. "My interest is all for your delight," he says, quoting the bard.

These are Indo-Arabian-Arthurian-Swiftian-Carrollian delights. A dolphin zooms up from the sea whenever hero Amitabh calls out to her. A monster, with an ET head and blue back-lit eyes, picks up the hero in his paw like King Kong. The hero, Ajooba, is a caped crusader-a cross between Zorro and the Lone Ranger. The only thing jarring in his "get-up" is the silver mask which recalls the Puf ad.

A magic potion turns Amitabh and Rishi Kapoor into miniatures, a la Alice in Wonderland. Nail-sized Rishi hides in his beloved Sonam's ample bosom,

NAMAS BHOJANI can't Leven imagine stepping into Raj Kapoor's

> maker." SHASHI KAPOOR

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Scene from Ajooba: thrill-a-minute

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Amitabh's literally in the cups.

Peter Perreira's special effects, with laser beams and size-changes, make this an adventure tale. But basically, Ajooba is a Hindi masala film—the usual good versus evil morality story. Evil in the form of Amrish Puri: the wicked wazir who would be sultan. Good in the form of the Baharistan sultan—Shammi Kapoor, who's been despatched by the ambitious wazir. His wife, Mallika, turns blind—a superb performance by Soviet actress Areadna Shengelaya.

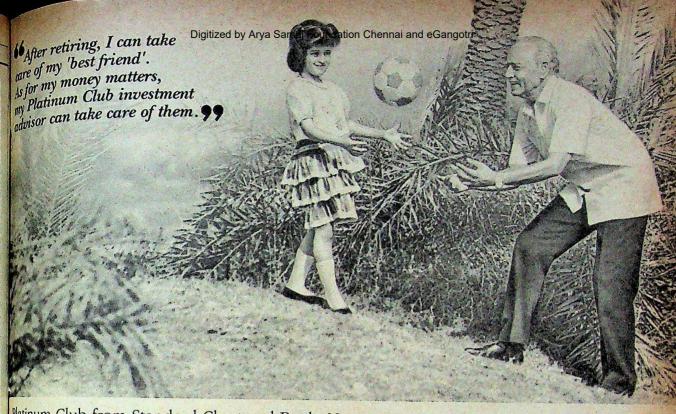
Ajooba is the heir-apparent bul doesn't know it. Like the proverbial Karna figure, he's pining for a mother In fact, the scenes with the blind beggar he adopts as his mother have

far more passion than those with his mehbooba Being superman is not enough. But, there's a bo nus at the end: the orphan finds his parents, an empire and that lovely girl from Hind-Dimple Kapadia-with hair that moves like the sea al high tide.

Most critics raised their brows Ajooba. But send logic of a holiday have some good escapist fare. —MADHU JAIN



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NAMPA by MEENA Mercury F Price: Rs 1

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#### Coming Home

An expatriate's lyrical debut

NAMPALLY ROAD by MEENA ALEXANDER Mercury House, Incorporated Price: Rs 192; Pages: 107



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USUALLY, it's the outsider who zeroes in on the rotten or the dying. But whether it's a Naipaul who maps the areas of darkness in India or others who dwell on its warts, their's is a

long-distance, often alien, view. What makes Meena Alexander's debut novel a good read is her double vision. She is an outsider: Alexander gew up in India and North Africa and now teaches writing in New York. And, being an Indian, she can also

Dame, the lady with the iconic white streak, casts a big, if distant, shadow. Chief minister Limca Gowda casts a more menacing shadow with his "ever ready" securitymen and their "irontipped batons" coming down brutally on dissent, especially on the helpless orange sellers protesting taxes.

Wordsworth comes up far short. Mira returned home, as the poet often did, to places he had loved. But for her; writing to "stitch" her life together-"my birth in India a few years after national Independence, my colonial education, my rebellion against the arranged marriage...my years of research in England"-became meaningless as fear gripped the city. "I had forgotten that the Wye Valley poet hated crowds, had no conception of the teeming, boisterous life we lived. The lines between the inner and outer he valued so deeply were torn apart in our lives." Solitary paths make no sense. Images must not spring from poets but from the people around them.

Here, the novel touches the raw core of those aware of state brutality yet do nothing about it. Mira's initial

#### **Intimate Ties**

A confidante's biography

TANTINE, THE LIFE OF JOSEPHINE MACLEOD by PRAVRAJIKA PRABUDDHAPRANA Sri Sarada Math Price: Rs 125; Pages: 339



CAUGHT between the cultists on the one hand, and desacralisers on the other, it is quite a tricky task to write about the friendship between an eastern monk and an upper class west-

ern socialite. Pravrajika Prabuddhaprana of the Ramakrishna Order has dared to do exactly that in his biography of Josephine MacLeod, the American friend of Swami Vivekananda. Josephine met Vivekananda in 1895 at



Alexander: vivid characterisation

#### E X C E R P T

"Ramu, I am twenty-five, but I hardly know what I am writing. I'm so tangled up inside with all that Wordsworth and Husserl and English education. What am I to do? You know that I can't go home now and have mother marry me off. I can't be washed clean of all my thoughts, be dressed up in silks and pearls and tiny gold slippers, married off in grand style to an engineer or an estate owner. Even if mother pulled it off, I would never survive. The old world is blowing up in our faces. Great Aunt Chinna is finding it harder and harder to tick off names in her little black book. 'So few good families.' '

effectively portray how the changes in the Indian social and political landscape affect the individual.

The slim novel depicts the inner World of Mira Kannadical, who after Words in England, getting her Words worth and the Romantics right, letterns to teach in Hyderabad—the tassion is 'a converted bedroom in what had once been the home of the het Sarojini Naidu". But what's Wordsworth doing in Hyderabad?

In Alexander's apocalyptic Hyderthe "whiffs of tear gas" never tage the winns of tear gas tue air, sirens are never her land a heartbeat away, and Rameeza Bee lies almost dead in the lock-up. ang raped by the police. This is a city which the Emergency Grande recourse to her inner world is contrasted sharply with her lover Ramu, who chooses the equally romantic call to arms: the active rebel for a cause.

Alexander's characters are vividly etched-the "Little Mother", the doctor who cares for patients through the turmoil and the marvellous portrait of Limca Gowda who tries to match his predecessor NGR, the screen idol. A cardboard city is erected for his birthday and his face replaces the wheel in the tricolour. This is a poet's novel. Alexander has three volumes of poetry to her credit. But at times, it suffers from an excess of poetry. Images become an inventory of the author's mind. But on the whole, it's a gripping book-grim but tautly lyrical. -MADHU JAIN



Vivekananda, Josephine

a New York lecture. and along with her sister Betty drawn to the man. For the next seven years, Vivekananda passed away in 1902, she remained his confidante, travelled with him, and shared some memorable intimate

moments with him. And for the next 47 years, she exerted herself to get the message of her mystic friend across the world and in many different languages-French, German, Greek, But

it was not just the simple relationship of a master and a disciple. She asserted time and again that she was only a friend of the Swamiji, a fact conceded even by Vivekananda. She did not become his disciple and take vows of celibacy as did Sister Nivedita. the schoolteacher from Wimbledon, England. She continued with her highprofile social whirligig of meeting the powerful and the famous in the fashionable drawing-rooms of New York, London, Paris, Geneva. But she took Vivekananda along and put him in touch with the important peopleacademics, artists, professors of philosophy, opera singers, and even fake healers. And she also donated liberally to the monastery at Belur, near Calcutta, which Vivekananda set up for the fellow-disciples of his

cerned, and he travelled with Josephine, Sarah Bull, another American, and Nivedita, to Almora and Kashmir.

Though replete with absorbing details of Josephine's social life and her encounters with the likes of Romain Rolland, Nikos Kazantzakis (she paid \$1,500 for the publication of the writer's famous work The Odyssey, George Bernard Shaw, and extensive use of private letters, the biography remains a mass of scattered details. The author has quoted 15 pages from Romain Rolland's journal of his conversations with Josephine in 1927. The original sources stand unassimilated.

There is also not much attempt to provide a critical perspective of the social background, thinking and experiences of the western disciples and friends of Vivekananda. Perhaps, it has

to be done by a sympathetic outsider. However, Prabuddhaprana has through this work opened up an interesting field civilisational counter between East and West.

Though an insider of the religious order, he has

#### **Fading Virtues**

Patel's poems are slight

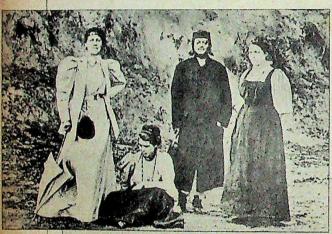
MIRRORED, MIRRORING by GIEVE PATEL Oxford University Press Price: Rs 50: Pages: 47



"Poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by singularity", then Gieve Patel's latest collection falls short, Keats' injunction finds little reflection in Mirrored. Mirroring: most of the poems in the volume

are slight in theme and treatment, and the last page turned, few images remain to reverberate in the mind.

Yet the slightness does not preclude all virtue. The striving after the everyday image (the wallowing buffaloes, Bombay Central); the plaintive probing of the quotidian (cold charity. the nature of vocations, a visit to a hill station); and the fleeting excursions into workaday metaphysics (springing



E X C E R P T (From left) Josephine, Dhira Mata, Vivekananda and Nivedita

A devotee, learning that there were some people still living who had seen Swami Vivekananda, felt a strong desire to see them and went to the Belur Math (in 1937). There, among others, he met Joe. He saw her one winter evening, sitting in a reclining chair with her body covered with a shawl. She was then about eighty years old. She said, 'People say I am old, but I do not consider myself old. I am a young woman of forty-five. I count my age from the day I first met Swamiji. That was really the beginning of my life. They say that I am a disciple of Swamiji, but they do not know: Swamiji used to call me his friend."

guru, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.

When she expressed her desire to come to India. Vivekananda wrote to her on July 10, 1897, warning of the difficulties: "You will have to bear with people who wear only a loin cloth; you will see me with only a loin cloth about me. Dirt and filth everywhere, and brown people. But you will have plenty of men to talk to you philosophy." She accepted the challenge and came in January 1898. Vivekananda was conunflinchingly presented the personal bond that existed between Vivekananda and Josephine which was both deep and amusing, mystical and irreverent. Josephine carried in her locket a lock of Vivekananda's hair. That should set the psychoanalysts on the prowl. But for Josephine and the other close friends of Vivekananda it was a symbol of the great affection that existed between the two.

-PARSA VENKATESHWAR RAO

#### The Difficulty

In the beginning it is difficult even to say, 'God',

One is so out of practice. And embarrassed.

Like lisping in public about candy. At fifty!

up at the end of poems to provide the larger summation; and especially trite when they grapple with God) do now and then engage the attention:

But it is not an engagement that extends itself into a relationship. Even the free form tends to deteriorate: for no apparent reasons of prosody, in some poems, even words are broken over two lines. These poems of Patel ale clearly slight; and slight their appeal -TARUN J. TEJPAL

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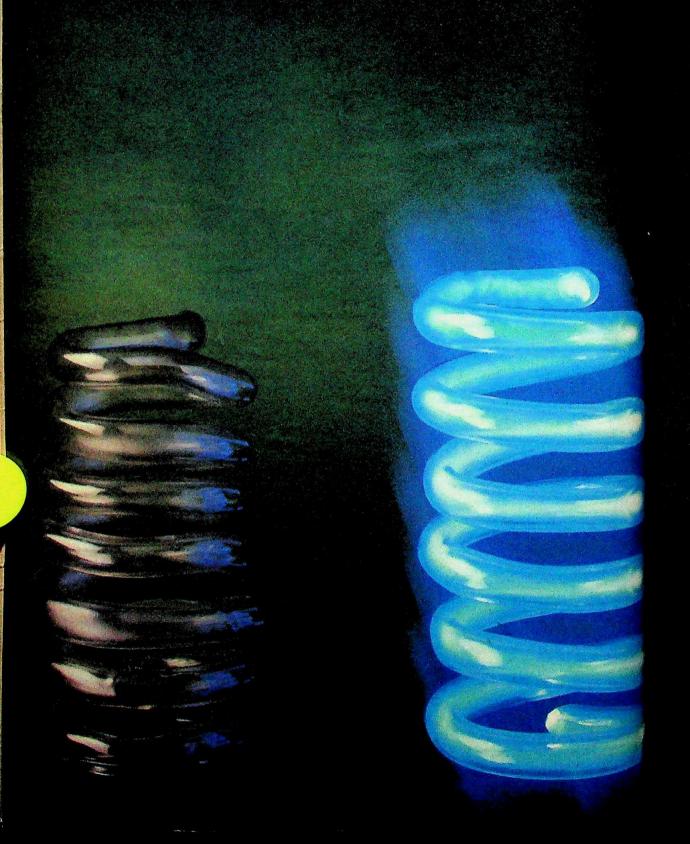
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## WE DARE NOT DREAM OF GIVING YOU ABSOLUTELY THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY.



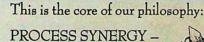
## BESIDES THE LATEST, WE ALSO DELIVER GLOBALLY PROVEN TECHNOLOGY. BECAUSE WE KNOW WHAT WORKS.

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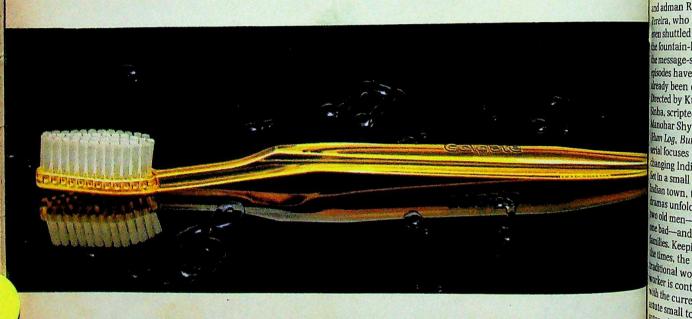
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Rediffusion

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, Shyam Benegal is bock on the teleundwagon. After his scovery of Nehru, it's to withe discovery of urharan Das, chairman Procter & Gamble. The Ushing wathis time is a 24-part grial based on Das phobiographical novel, A in Family. Called Ghar it will re-create nationa be period from the

perfec

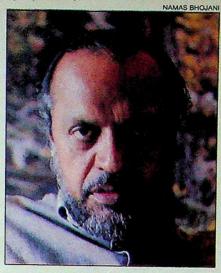
aximum

1930s to the 1970s. + Finally, Hum Rahi, a Troop intended to do what heoriginal Indian soap hm Log was supposed to b, has begun to roll. The soap is J.R.D. Tata's brainchild and adman Roger lereira, who has ren shuttled to Mexico. be fountain-head of hemessage-soap. Four pisodes have ready been canned. Directed by Kunwar Sinha, scripted by Vanohar Shyam Joshi Rum Log, Buniyaad), the erial focuses on the danging Indian woman. stin a small north hian town, the many ramas unfold around moold men—one good. mebad—and their anilies. Keeping up with betimes, the raditional woman social worker is contrasted hib the current politicallyestute small town atar—bhabhiji in this ad who moves up the

Never mind the neymoon. Barely were wedding nuptials in hipati over when telethess Rekha Sahay tasback to work. The 1&B aister's bride has been tid to produce a telefilm Doordarshan. She also make a few of the minute serials for in morning and noon programmes. h such a windfall, it's surprising a few rows were raised.

ower ladder.

Benegal: back on the bandwagon





A still from Hum Rahi: women power



 Sahay with Rekha: minister's wedding gifts

It was like a gold rush last winter when producers were asked to submit programmes for sponsored serials. Before you could say Mandi House. 3.515 of them had piled up. But then they began to gather dust. Now that finally the sorting out has begun, the screening committee is rejecting proposals at the cruel rate of six out of eight. Apparently, the quality of most of the programmes is 'abysmally substandard". according to one of the senior officials.

 Last fortnight. when people settled down after the English news to watch Circus-popular with the young girls because of Fauji Sharoukh Khan-they were in for a surprise. Up popped the continuing saga of Babasaheb Ambedkar's centenary. Many believed it was Environment Minister Maneka Gandhi's campaign against off-screen circuses for what they did to animals. But the real reason was the centenary itself. With the Central

Election Commission's stipulations that pp should be balanced in its allocation of time to political parties and personalities in force, such a centenary is a godsend. Political leaders from different parties have piggybacked on to the celebrations which occupy prime time day after day. And, hence on to the screen. Most prominently so, the prime minister himself. Whether he's addressing one of the numerous functions or opening some exhibition. the camera lingers on him much more than it does on the exhibits.

-MADHU JAIN

in





# and eGangotri

varied fare also included some plain carnival buffoonery. Said Brazilian Ambassador Octavio Rainho Neves. who flew from down New Delhi specially for the occasion: "Ties between India and Brazil can only grow closer in the future." Well. with the lambada. they certainly

couldn't get any closer.

#### Ribald Business

Pritish Nandy is the quintessential editormarketing he's marketing himself now. Huge beforeand-after advertisements-first with hair and then with a shaven bristly patestared the newspaper reader in the face making him choke over his morning cuppa tea. The bald new look was part of a campaign



Nandy and Amrish Puri; and (inset) the advertisement

#### Royal Debutant

 Another star son shines on the celluloid horizon. This time it's the son of actress Sharmila Tagore and dapper cricketer-prince Pataudi-Saif Tiger Khan, Making his debut in a still to be titled love story the cherubic new-comer is ready to bowl over the teeny boppers. Why not cricket instead of acting? Says he: "I've never considered cricket as a career. I play but for personal



Saif Khan: star son

Move

enjoyment."

Khan is here.

#### **Unsuccessful Take-off**

 First, it was the Seychelles. Then, Hamburg, But Devi Lal's Man Friday, K.K. Deepak hasn't been able to take off. Yet. The long arm from Rashtrapati Bhavan pulled him back from going to Hamburg as consul-general. "I've been told I'm going," says he. So the bags remain packed.



Cartoon by JAYANTO

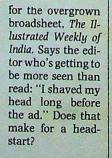
## The Bopping Politico

over, Aamir Khan. Sai

Behind the pokerfaced H.K.L. Bhaga hides the ultimate party animal. And thi time the party wasn' the Congress(I). H was jiving to a foot stomping number b crooner Parvati Kha at a function in the capital. While the sta parade included Hen Malini and Chun Pandey, the big dra was the bopping pol ico. Keep moving, Bhagat, the show ha just begun.

> Bhagat with Khan tango time







HEMANT PITHWA

A lambada dancer:

Brazilian Bonanza

The band played for too

long. The dancers came on

too late. But boy, could

they lambada. And samba. Steamy Brazil invaded Bom-

bay in the form of eight

attractive dancers swathed

in psychedelically coloured

plumes and their raunchy-

Part of a 10-day-long

sounding samba band.

Carnival Brasilia to in-

augurate the grand

Taj Ballroom, the girls

from Brazil had it all-

from carnival style dances to jugglery.

Needless to say, their

NAMAS BHOJANI

steamy stuff



For the gracious people

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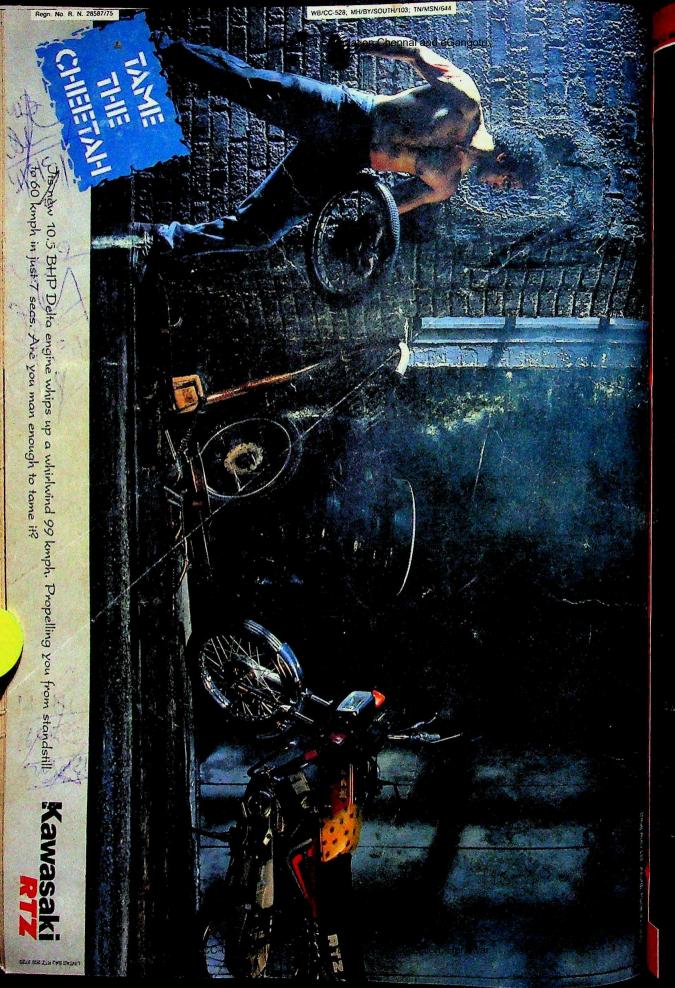


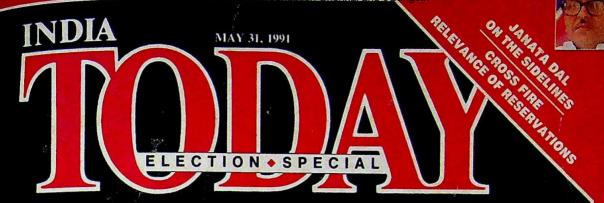
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# OPINION POLL

CONGRESS(I)
TAKING
THE LEAD

It will improve its position considerably, but still fall just short of a majority.





DRAMATIC GAINS

It is poised to double its present strength and emerge as the single largest opposition party.





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Of Cruc Poll Talk The return of Mrs Indira Gandhi, it fetched abuse the return of Mrs Indira Gandhi, it fetched abuse and scorn from politician and pundit alike. The carpers, of whom there were legion, said western techniques of poll analysis and prediction could not be applied here, for Indiawas simply too vast and complicated a country. In the event, Mrs Gandhi won and psephology, the scientific study of voting trends and analysis, had successfully taken a pioneering step and the seed took root.

Today, more than 10 years later, the process seems to have reached a happy vindication. Opinion polls have come into their own, and many publications conduct them to forecast possible results, while politicians talk glibly about 100s (Index of Opposition Unity) and swings, and even

conduct private polls quietly.

Yet it is not as if forecasting elections through opinion polls has ceased to be a hazardous business. In fact for us at INDIA TODAY it is a particularly tricky enterprise, despite the bull's eye scored by us in the 1989 elections, when we accurately predicted 195 seats for the Congress(I). In any case, the present election has proved more difficult than most, what with a triad of contenders emerging, unlike in the past when it has always been a one-on-one face-off. Keeping this in mind, we tried to further broadbase our poll, and almost doubled our sample size to 20,312 voters

from 10,710. As last time, we will also be conducting exit polls, the results of which will be run in the national newspapers on May 26. This issue we also wind up our series on parrty coverage with an assessment of the Janata Dal. And, in our continuing series of debates on key concerns, we have experts discuss the issue of reservations.

As the heat, dust and noise of electioneering rise to a crescendo and opinion polls cast a shadow of things to come, it is once again clear that the Indian electorate continues to mature rapidly and can no longer be taken for granted. The Indian voter has become capable of weighing his options and assessing performance, of rejecting parties that disillusion and anointing those that hold out promise. The Congress(I) was reduced by half between 1985 and 1989; the BJP after being relegated to the dustbin with two seats in 1985 seems to be rising Phoenix-like; and in between the Janata Dal was accorded a chance at governance, which it may now be denied.

Clearly, in spite of the many confusing signals, the voter knows his mind. And regardless of who wins, his verdict should once again prove a salutary one.

Moonline

#### IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT



# A New Watershed

The INDIA TODAY-MARG poll predicts that the Congress(I) is leading but will fall short of a majority. Amazingly, the BJP will be the second largest party, and for the first time the Centre-Right axis will end up grabbing more than 80 per cent seats.



## **Emerging Battle Lines**

Post-Mandal, reservations for the OBCs have become an issue that threatens to rip Indian society apart as it generates extremes of passion and anger. As part of its continuing series on key issues, INDIA TODAY invited some experts to debate the subject.

DEBATE......95



## Convulsed by Catastrophe

The devastation wreaked by a 12-hour cyclone has left Bangladesh badly crippled. The cataclysm has ended with about half a million people dead, and the economy ravaged. Sloppy relief work is only prolonging the nightmare of the survivors.

SPECIAL REPORT......130

#### CONTENTS

	The second second second
OPINION POLL National Politics: A Name III	
WION POLY	
National Politics: A New Watershed. National Front:	A
Polis	mmi 🛣
Nation - MILICS: A New Minter	
watersned.	T
National Front:	
MUDDIC	
She will Out of Char	
and Came of Steam	10
Running Out of Steam  Star Campaigners The Air Assault:	
THE Air A	22
Assaule.	
Appara	
Age of the Jetsetters	The same
Assemble	44
Or a mottes:	
Cropial .	
Poll a limporta-	
at falk Portrance	52
Of Crucial Importance	
The Contract of the Contract o	6.0
The state of the s	01

Key Contests: Pulling Out the Stops	66
Betting: Fluctuating Fortunes	80
Poll Violence: Ominous Signals	85
CROSS FIRE	
Reservations: Emerging Battle Lines	95
Economy:	
Addressing the Real Issues	116
SPECIAL REPORT	
Bangladesh:	
Convulsed by Catastrophe	130

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VOLUME XVI NUMBER 9; FOR THE FORTNIGHT MAY 16-31, 1991

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Images tumble in the Big Apple.

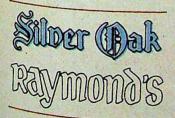
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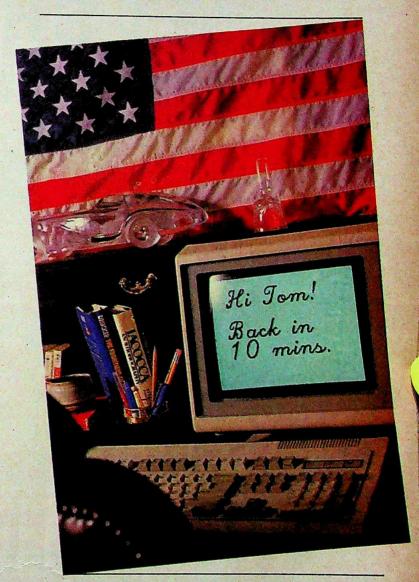
Not just any Raymond's fabric. Silver Oak.

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**OPINION POLL** 

# CONGRESS(I): AHEAD, YET SHORT

The Congress(I) remains the best bet for forming the government, but most amazing is the saffron surge by the BJP.

INDIA TODAY commissioned MARG (Marketing and Research Group) to conduct a poll in 51 Lok Sabha constituencies. These were selected to reflect the country's mood in the various swing zones. This was done by taking into account swings in various elections, Over 250 MARG interviewers covered around 400 locations and interviewed 20,312 voters between May 7 and May 10. Of these, 14,340 (70.6 per cent) were interviewed in villages

and 5,972 (29.4 per cent) in urban areas. Respondents were asked: "If an election were held tomorrow, who would you vote for?" They were asked to mark their choices and place the ballot papers in a portable ballot box. Fourteen per cent did not indicate their preferences.

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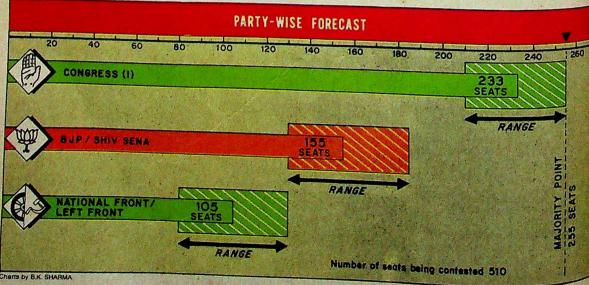
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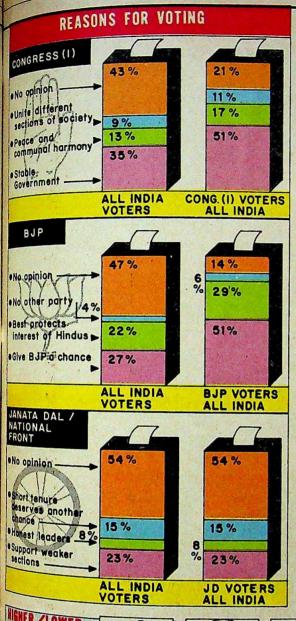
The results were fed into a computer which calculated the swings in each of the 51 constituencies. These were then projected into each constituency within the respective swing zones to calculate the seats likely to be won by the Congress(I). The poll findings suggest there is still a fair degree of uncertainty prevailing among the electorate. The findings have been reported by Prannoy Roy and MARG.

## CONGRESS(I) STRENGTH IN LOK SABHA

100	107 Seats	132 Seats	128 Seats	143 Seats	Total	Total	
	THE NORTH	THE SOUTH	THE EAST	THE WEST	Congress(I) Seats	Lok Sabha Seats	% of Seats
1991 Forecast	32	86	45	70	233	510*	45.9
1989 Actual	26	108	21	40	195	529 **	36.9
1984 Actual	114	71	-96	134	415	542	76.6

ountermanded seats and excluding Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Assam \*Excluding Assam (14 seats) where elections were not held





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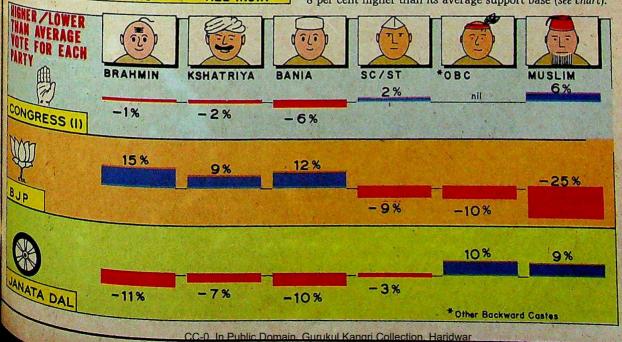
F elections to the Lok Sabha had been held between May 7 and May 10 when this opinion poll was conducted, the Congress(I) would have re-emerged as the largest single party with 233 seats. The dark horse of this election is the BJP which, with the Shiv Sena, is likely to emerge as the clear second with over 150 seats. This marks a true watershed in Indian politics where electoral battles have traditionally been fought between the Centre and the Left. The balance has swung rightwards with around 80 per cent of the seats likely to be won by the Centre-Right parties.

The INDIA TODAY-MARG poll shows that while 'Ram' is an important factor behind the saffron surge, the major reason behind the large swing to the BJP is distillusionment with the poor performance of other parties. More than half of those voting for the BJP are doing so only to give the new party a chance. Ironically, the same anti-establishment sentiment is also working against the BJP in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. The Janata Dal, which led the charge against the Congress(I) in 1989, lies in a shambles with virtually no presence outside Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Thisscenario places the Congress(I) on a razor's edge. If the political situation does not change, then the Congress(I) even with its main ally, the AIADMK, sweeping the 12 seats it is contesting will fall 10 short of the magic 255. By roping in a few others, a government with a wafer-thin majority could result. But if the BIP surge continues and the Congress(I) slumps to below 220, then the only way a Congress(I)-led government can be formed is through large-scale defections.

Compared with 1989, the Congress(I) has gained around 40 seats despite a 1-2 per cent drop in its share of votes. This is because the drop in votes is more than offset by disunity among the non-Congress(I) parties (with the Index of Opposition Unity declining by 10-15 per cent since 1989).

The Congress(I)'s main gains are expected from the BJP-ruled states of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan and from Janata Dal-ruled Orissa. Its support amongst the upper castes, particularly the Brahmins, has been sharply eroded by the BJP but it continues to retain its hold on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, as well as the Muslims. In both these categories, the Congress(I)'s share of votes is higher than its average performance. The Janata Dal also performs remarkably well among the Muslims, the Muslim support being 8 per cent higher than its average support base (see chart).



#### THE ISSUE MOST LIKELY TO AFFECT VOTING

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Rising prices, more than any other issue, are likely to affect voting behaviour at the forthcoming elections. The other three issues lag way behind. Among the BJP backers and among the Muslims, as well as in the north and the west, Ayodhya is clearly the second most important issue.

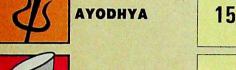
## THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE (%)

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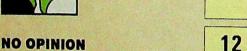
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\*All figures in percentage.

#### **Reservations For OBCs**

Just over 40 per cent agree with the concept of reservations for OBCs, though there is also a fair degree of opposition (34 per cent) to the idea. The remaining 26 per cent are undecided. The strongest backers of reservations, not surprisingly, are supporters of the National Front, while the BJP-Shiv Sena voters are ranged clearly against Mandal. The Brahmins are virulently against Mandal (65 per cent against and 12 per cent for), and the other forward castes also oppose Mandal (around 50 per cent against and 30 per cent for). It is only among the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and backward castes that a majority support Mandal.

#### Have the minorities been pampered by the governments?

While a quarter of the voters refused to comment, among the rest (and this was true of supporters of all parties) the consensus was that minorities have been pampered by all governments. As expected, among Muslims, views are fairly evenly divided on whether minorities have been appeased by successive governments.

#### Will the demolishing or removal of the masjid leave a scar on communal relations?

There is majority support for the view that if the Babri Masjid is demolished or moved to make way for the Ram mandir, it will leave a scar on communal relations that will be difficult to heal. Surprisingly, this view is shared almost as widely by supporters of all leading parties.

#### Can coalition governments be stable?

The experience of the past 18 months of coalition governments has obviously not been a happy one for the Indian electorate. While 51 per cent feel that coalitions cannot provide stability, 21 per cent believe that coalition governments can be stable. The BIP voters, more than the backers of other parties, believe that coalition governments are likely to be stable.

The BJP's appeal is the strongest in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat. In Karnataka, where the BJP has never won a seat, it is the dark horse. Even in cpi(M)-ruled West Bengal, it is expected to make a noticeable debut (in terms of votes). The gain in BJP support has primarily affected the Janata Dal. Almost 25 per cent of the Janata Dal voters in 1989 have switched their support to the BJP this time. And for almost 50 per cent of those staying with the Congress(I), the BJP is the party of second choice. Those staying with the National Front are, however, more likely to opt for the Congress(I) than the врр. A significant finding of the INDIA TODAY-MARG poll is that, from being a 'Bania' party, the BJP has now become a party of the forward castes. The BJF has become the party of the better educated, the trader, the white collar worker and the professional. It is also a 'male' party, a 'young' party and an urban party.

Significantly, 14 per cent of the voters say there is some chance that they will change their minds before election day. (In fact, the INDIA TODAY-MARG Exit Poll in November, 1989published in INDIA TODAY, December 15, 1989—reported that 9 per cent of the voters had made up their minds on polling day or on the previous day.) It is worth noting that a swing of just 1 per cent could result in a shift of 15-20 seats. A change in voting preferences between the opinion poll and election day

as well as sampling errors inherent in the sample could very well be 3-4 per cent. In terms of seats, this could alter the results by 50-70 seats in either direction. Also, the turnout could have an impact on the fortunes of the various parties. In Indian elections, the turnout over the past four elections has averaged at around 60 per cent. It is generally believed that lower turnout benefits cadre-based parties or parties with committed voters. Thus, a lower turnout is more likely to benefit the BJP, while a higher turnout will be better for the Congress(I). Also, traditionally, a greater proportion of men than women go for voting. Thus, an increase in the share of women's votes will be good for the Congress(I) while a greater male dominance will result in more seats for the BJP. Tactical voting by the Muslim electorate (in favour of any party likely to defeat the BJP) may alter the scenario on election day.

This election certainly represents a watershed in terms of the emergence of a Centre-Right axis. As importantly, it is landmark because for the first time in India's history, a party with a substantial strength of over 150 seats (the BJP) will have an extremely polarised support base, comprising primarily the forward castes. In the midst of late swings, differential turnouts and tactical voting, the polarised support portends

opinion poll and election day one more uncertainty to ponder over.

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## NATIONAL POLITICS

# ANEW WATERSHED

By INDERJIT BADHWAR with bureau reports

he past 18 months were like a paid political advertisement for the Congress(I): a trilaterally perched National Front government that came apart at the seams because dinternecine quarrels and religious and caste polarisation and violence. A rump government that barely functioned while the nation's coffers dried up and prices skyrocketed. Regional parties like the Telugu Desam and the DMK-allied with the National Front-discredited in their home states. A divided opposition. The inability of the anti-Congress(I)

coalitions to function efectively, instability, and rising prices were heavenmade slogans that should have propelled the Congress(I) skywards. But what has the party done? Instead, it finds itself in the unenviable position of forming a government only through alliances and defections. If it manages 230-odd seats, as the INDIA TODAY-MARG poll indicates, it can from the government by roping in allies like the ALADMK, assorted independents, and making deals with the Indian People's Front, Jharhand Mukti Morcha, and <sup>even</sup> Bansi Lal's Haryana Vikas Party for the requisite 255 seats needed for a simple majority. It will hen count on defections from other parties—paricularly from the Ajit Singh and Biju Patnaik goups of the Janata Dal—

o increase this tally further.

What has enfeebled the Congress(I) is its mediocre cam-Mign and party infighting in comparison with the breathand party infighting in comparison with the classification and cohesive campaign of the BIP. Nowhere was this Normal Constraint State of the BJP. Now Held Which the saffron which saffron saffr the saffron wave started and to which the Congress(I) paid attention. Rantattention until the last two weeks of the electioneering.

There is like the trend-setter. There is little doubt that Uttar Pradesh is the trend-setter, state from where any discernible wave affects the rest of country. Even three weeks ago, it seemed as if the hgress(I) stood a chance here. The voters seemed to be stoward the Congress(I)'s stability platform. Harijan voters had turned back to the Congress(I) fold. Muslims were wavering-unwilling to be taken for granted as a Janata Dal vote bank—looking for winning candidates to defeat the BJP.

But the Congress(I) was failing to capitalise on the votes, and the BJP leapfrogged over both the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal with its superior organisation and drive to demonstrate that the party can surmount all odds as did its cadres when they reached Ayodhya last October. The party is expected to increase its strength (from the present eight seats) by sevenfold in Uttar Pradesh and to double it in Gujarat.

In fact Gujarat looks as if it will emerge as the second BIP

SHARAD SAXENA

Though the inaction of the non-Congress(I) coalitions gave the party a golden opportunity, it has failed to translate it into clear victory.

bastion after Uttar Pradesh, thanks largely to the ineffectual alliance between the Congress(I) and Chimanbhai Patel's Janata Dal(G) and the formidable campaign launched by mahants, sadhus, and the RSS to neutralise the KHAM (Kshatriya, Harijan. Adivasi, Muslim) combine that the Congress(I) has banked on. Gujarat. which has seen horrendous communal violence. is so heavily influenced by the Ram campaign that even the traditionally pro-Congress(I) Patels are divided between the BJP and the anti-BJP parties.

The Congress(I) is likely to hold on to Karnataka (where the Deve Gowda-Hegde alliance is faltering), Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. But not without losses. In Karnataka, the non-performance of

the Bangarappa Government and the wounded feelings of the Lingayats after the unceremonious ouster of Veerendra Patil will hurt some. In Maharashtra the Congress(I) has the edge because of the relatively superior party organisation and its hold over the sugar belt. But it is likely to lose cities like Bombay, Nagpur, Nasik, Pune to the BJP-Shiv Sena combine.

There will be Congress(I) losses farther down south too in Andhra Pradesh, but not significant. These will largely be in the northern Telangana area where the Naxalites are active. and in the north coastal districts where the Telugu Desam is effective. But the Congress(I) is far better organised than the Telugu Desam, which no longer appears as a credible national

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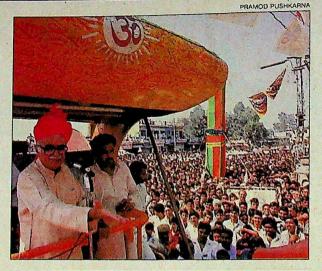
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But if the BJP is expected to make its presence felt in the most unexpected of places-West Bengal, Orissa, Gujarat, and Karnataka-it is also expected to take a thrashing in other unexpected places (where it now rules) like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. This is the upshot of anti-establishmentarianism.

Apart from the expected parliamentary seats, an equally important-and perhaps more permanent-result that has crystallised is the emergence in the 10th Lok Sabha of what could be a viable two-party system in the country.

The saffron surge is for real. It promises to create a

watershed in Indian politics by establishing for the first time in 40 years a viable and ideologically disparate alternative to the Congress(I) that is not composed of Congress-minded ginger groups drawing their strength from factional, sectional, or regional power bases. Ideological comparisons based on economic philosophies are perhaps arcane today in view of the eager acceptance by the socialist world of the dynamism of free market forces. In that sense-except for diehards in the Janata Dal and the Left Front-other national parties have eschewed their traditional penchant for economic fundamentalism. But if the Left and the Right in India can be defined according to acceptance or rejection of the Nehruvian consensus, then the Congress(I) represents the Left and the BJP the Right.



The BJP has leapfrogged over the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal and promises to establish a viable ideological alternative.

The other tangible political transformation that seems to be occurring is that with the BJP having come centre stage with a bang. the scramble among opposition parties (ironically "opposition parties" until this election meant anti-Congress(I) parties) to form anti-BIP fronts will be the new phenomenon. In the past, whenever the Congress(I) lost an election, it was able to stage a come-back of sweeping dimensions. Not this time. Indira Gandhi's party. now shorn of its Lok Dal, socialist and Janata elements. has been reduced to a cohesive core group.

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It has lost the Ram-Mandal belt in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to the BIP and the Janata Dal. The BIP has made a palpable dent in the Congress(I)'s upper class voters. But a

Congress(I) government of 1991 is unlikely to electrify the nation with dramatic new strides. Even though its latest manifesto makes a sharp departure on the economic front with promises of liberal doses of Thatcherism, its implementation will require energetic and imaginative leadership that Rajiv has not displayed. He continues set in the old mould (see interview), surrounded by the same lacklustre advisers.

The message from the voters may not produce a clear result but it will make a clear statement: at a national level they have rejected conclusive victories for parties with divisive appeals. And they seem to be in no mood to vote in any party with a brute majority unless it has been able to demonstrate that it can tackle national issues with determination, political will and commitment.

# **Opportunistic Options**

F another scenario emerges with no party securing more than 200 seats as in 1989, all parties will scramble furiously to form a government. They are short of cash and unwilling to face the voters for yet another mid-term poll. What kind of strange bedfellows will emerge is already the subject of hectic discussions.

SCENARIO 1: Congress(I): 200. Send feelers to Left for an alliance "to keep communal forces from power". Break Janata Dal by wooing Ajit Singh and Biju Patnaik. Woo regional parties, BSP. Left leaders admit a "realignment of forces" possible (Congress(I) minus Rajiv with Jyoti Basu as alternative prime minister).

SCENARIO 2: BJP: 200. First try and forge alliance with regional parties like AIADMK, TD, and the Jharkhand

Mukti Morcha. Encourage demoralised Congressmen to defect and join BJP. Advani says: "We will welcome Congressmen with faith in Sardar Patel, G.B. Pant and Sampoornanand." Coalition with Congress(I) ruled out.

SCENARIO 3: National Front-Left combine: 150, and Congress(I): 180-190. V.P. Singh may eschew prime ministership to support a merger of Janata Dal and Congress(I) minus Rajiv Gandhi to form an anti-BJP front.

SCENARIO 4: Samajwadi Janata Party: 20-30 seats. and Congress(I). National Front-Left, and BJP around 150 each. Chandra Shekhar tries to win over allies from all sides. Try and ally his party with the National Front and the Congress(I) minus V.P. Singh and Rajiv Gandhi. Will woo MPs from all formations to stage a come-back.

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NATIONAL FRONT

# **RUNNING OUT OF** STEA

Incurable optimists talk of unleashing a new "political polarisation" but V. P. Singh is more realistic. He knows that his party needs a string of staggering successes merely to match its previous performance.

The funds have

dried up, the party

is in a shambles and

the leaders are at

loggerheads. Singh

is the only glue

keeping it together.

By ZAFAR AGHA with FARZAND AHMED and DILIP AWASTHI

F you listen to senior party leaders talking, the Janata Dal should double its strength in Parliament or even form the government on its own. Their most optimistic guesstimates give the party 300 seats. The "realistic" ones about 200. The air is full of confident talk about "social forces polarising in our favour". Claims Ram Vilas Paswan: "Dalits and minorities, the traditional Congress vote banks, are with us." Syed Shahabuddin, a new convert to the Janata Dal, speaks about "Muslims inclining towards V.P. Singh all over the country". For them, the vote bank that Singh conjured out of his Mandal bag of tricks has jelled into a one-way ticket to victory. But Singh, at this late stage in the campaign, is a realist. He offers no prognostications. His awareness of the very serious problems besetting the party is reflected in his predictions of a forthcoming period of possible political

"fluidity" (see interview). Simple mathematics reveals that the party must ride a wave of staggering proportions in order just to double its strength, leave alone gaining a plurality in Parliament. The united Janata Dal of 1989 bagged 142 seats. Of these 86 came from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. But since the party split of November 1990, the Janata Dal base has shrunk dramatically. Its strength has been reduced to 75 parliamentary seats out of which a staggering 53 seats are from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar rendering the status of the party to a virtually regional entity. If

the party is to even equal its previous 1989 record it has to double its present strength in Uttar Pradesh (33) and Bihar (20) and bring in at least 40 new seats from the south where it practically drew a blank the last time round.

Some of the crowd responses that V.P. Singh has received in the south and in Maharashtra during the last few months of campaigning are cause for optimism. But the magic of 1989 that drew enthusiastic, wildly cheering crowds of students, professionals and the middle classes, cutting across caste and religious barriers, is no more.

There are several reasons for this. The image of the party as truly representative of the new forces of the socially backwards and Muslims may be more cohesive. But it has severely circumscribed Singh's broadbased appeal. And the throngs of active student volunteers and intellectuals who organised his road shows and campaign bundobust are now his enemies.

The Mandal mantra, while appealing in the south, is no electoral novelty there because the southern states already have high levels of job reservations and quotas. In the north other national parties quietly co-opted it. The Congress(I) has allocated a greater percentage of its seats to OBCs than before And the BJP has also moved in to steal the Mandal thunder. In Bareilly, for example, the BJP has allocated four assembly seats to Kurmis. In Badaun, its assembly candidates include a Dhobi, a Shakya, a Yadav, a Bania and a Lodha.

Party funds are also drying up. The cash box is almost empty and no benefactors are queuing up with offers to replenish it. The Janata Dal's poverty is manifest in the comparative absence of posters, banners, buntings, or even wall graffiti. Cars are a luxury. Says party spokesman S. Jaipal

Reddy: "Our entire campaign budgetis Rs 25 lakh." This may not be entirely accurate but it is certainly an admission of the party's dire financial straits.

The party is in a shambles. V.P. Singh and his vote-catching prowess his tireless energy, is still its adhesive But it resembles a collection of factions fighting to come to power as factions rather than as a cohesive party struggling to form the next governmentunder the V.P. Singh umbrella. The aims of the various factions appear to be to maximise their own numbers in the Lok Sabha to be in a position to influence the horse-trading in the event of there

being another hung Parliament.

Key party leaders are at loggerheads. Ajit Singh and Sharad Yadav are fighting for ascendancy in Uttar Pradesh Orissa's Biju Patnaik, whose state comprises nine (the third largest contingent after Uttar Pradesh and Bihar) of the party's 75 MPs, has openly declared that he does not wish see Singh as prime minister. In Bihar, Chief Minister Lalo Prasad Yadav and Harijan leader Paswan have fallen out

Squabbling and disorganisation at the top—exacerbated by Singh's 60-per cent caste-based formula for party posts can hardly translate into a cohesive organisation at the grassroots capable of transforming strategy and voter of sponse into actual votes.

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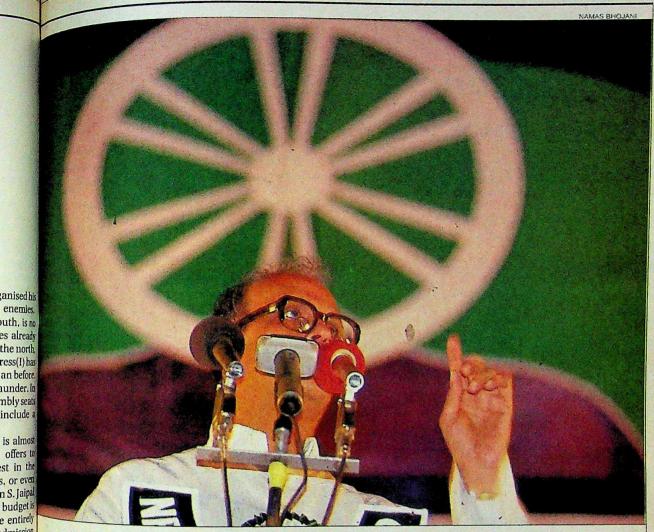
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An Intent V.P. Singh making a point at an election rally in Uttar Pradesh: uneven run

deligonate infighting within the party: have was the time to build the party organisation? The election verdict will make or break the National Front. imposes a heavy burden on Singh, its lone star cammer, who is having to spread himself very thin indeed. His heaving to spread minisen very involves hopping from Maharashtra to Andhra desh, spending a day in Gujarat, going south to Kerala and Nadu and in between trying to fit in the two states where grous result is expected and where the final destiny of the Shis some Will be decided—Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. this so over-stretched that he went to Uttar Pradesh, for aple, only on May 8 after a long gap. In his absence, the BJP wysteppedin and made considerable inroads into pockets at and Yadav vote banks were concentrated.

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By this time around the going looks tougher, especially in the product of the pro rradesh. And there may well be unexpected problems in that may somewhat reduce the scope of the total 54-seat that Laloo Yadav is confidently prophesying.

hoth states the main problem is the glaring lack of any grassroote grassroots organisation, along with the appearance of stin the party's vote banks. It is true that in 1989 too the the party's vote banks. It is true that in 1707 the party's vote banks. It is true that in 1707 the party's vote banks. It is true that in 1707 the party had no grassroots organisation but the situation then lastly different: there were fewer multi-cornered conand in many crucial areas BJP cadres gave it the ary organisational support.

a virtual Janata Dal pocket borough. One man is responsible for this: Laloo Yadav. Not since Shri Krishna Singh has any chief minister straddled the state like a political colossus as does Laloo Yaday. He has forged the backwards in the state into a cohesive force, endowed with a psychological sense of identity and pitted against the traditional dominance of the Bhumihars, Rajputs, Brahmins and Kayasthas.

rags-to-power politician, Laloo Yadav is a powerful orator and a compulsive campaigner with a devastating sense of black humour that delights his audiences (see box). He has already campaigned in all 54 constituencies in Bihar and intends to repeat the feat before the voting begins. He has emerged as an unchallenged regional leader much in the style of MGR. But that could also be the party's weakness, for as a result, in Bihar the Janata Dal means only Laloo. While he has become a folk hero for the backwards and the minorities (for his firm stand against Advani's Rath Yatra), the fact remains that without Laloo Yadav, no party organisation worth the name exists.

Moreover, caste politics has its own drawbacks. The dominant OBC caste now enjoying political patronage is the Yadav community. This has caused ripples of resentment Banias. Together with the "EBCS (extremely state) Banias (extremely sta

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percentage (52 per cent) in the state. The distribution of percentage (52 per cent) in the state. The distribution of percentage in the state in the

It's these sort of vulnerable areas that the BJP and the Congress(I) are hoping to exploit in order to stem the "Laloo toofan" (hurricane). In Uttar Pradesh, however, the opposition to the Janata Dal has its work cut out because the party sems bent on its own destruction.

The Janata Dal cannot be written offentirely yet because itsnatural for campaigns to hit peaks and troughs. But right now Uttar Pradesh looks like one big trough for the party. Until the third week of April, it was an equal contender in triangular contests all over the state's Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha seats along with the BJP and the Congress(I). Since then it has begun to slide dramatically. Infighting.

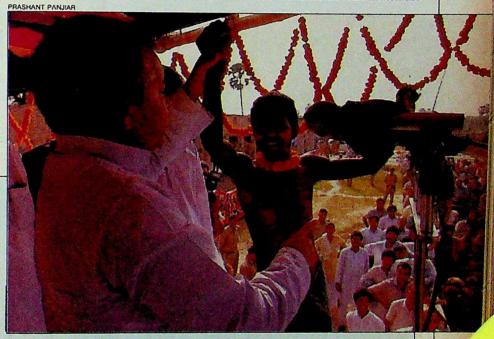
confusion. lack of enthusiasm among party workers and the absence of district-level organisations have taken their toll.

Speedy ticket distribution to effective candidates is the hallmark of any efficient political organisation. The Janata Dal's exercise was a fasco. All it did was expose the infighting that has continued to plague the party even after the exit of the Jan Morcha group led by Arun

Nehru and Arif Mohammad Khan. The tussle between Ajit Singh and Sharad Yadav over calling the shots in ticket allocations for the Vidhan Sabha has led to near farcical scenarios. In Bahraich, for example, where expelled Janata Dal leader Arif Mohammad Khan is running as an independent, the official Janata Dal parliamentary candidate as well as all the assembly candidates have also had to run as independents because they did not receive their party symbols in time.

N Lucknow, Singh was gheraoed for over an hour last fortnight at the airport on his arrival from Delhi by the agitated supporters of a Lucknow mafia boss who had been assured a party ticket but then let down at the last minute. In several other constituencies the official Janata Dal candidates face as many as four rebel contenders.

There is also no one in Uttar Pradesh who can match the



LALOO PRASAD YADAV

# Charismatic Campaign

FI.COME to the Laloo Yadav show, the highlight of the 1991 election Carnival. A one-man show un-

matched in political ferocity, biting satire, and earthy arrogance. Eyes shut, jaw turned to accommodate tobacco, hand raised heavenwards. Laloo bhaiya reminds you of the Dilip Kumar of Sungharsh, the lovable, defiant bhaiya from the east, with an exaggerated drawl. Except, Laloo is the original, and the show he has taken to all 54 Bihar constituencies using his government's helicopter has all the rasas of political theatre. Savour these:

Pathos: I've no shame in saying I was the son of a poor Yadav with three bighas of land and one poonch kati (tailless) buffalo. When I first gave my mother a Rs 100-note she couldn't understand. The detection has it is like five 20s.

she couldn't understand. I had to tell her it's like five 20s.
Social message: How could someone like a peon become chief minister? Because chief ministers today come
from ballot-hove the could someone ministers today come

from ballot-boxes you fill with votes. This is democracy.

Defiance: Congress(I) says suspend Laloo's Government. Hum koyee daroga hain (Am I a sub-inspector) who be suspend at will? Karke dekhine (Try doing it).

You can suspend at will? Karke dekhiye (Try doing it). Humour: Who am I scared of? Jagannath Mishra? I've seen plenty of laddu-peda Mishras. The BJP? Having collected crores for the temple, their slogan is duniya mein kariye (Have a good time with the donations). Or Devi Lal,

rprise(S)

Yadav with a toddy tapper: mass appeal

Haryana's parua bail (a bullock that eats a lot but refuses to work)? Or janata-ass? Ass, you know, means gadha.

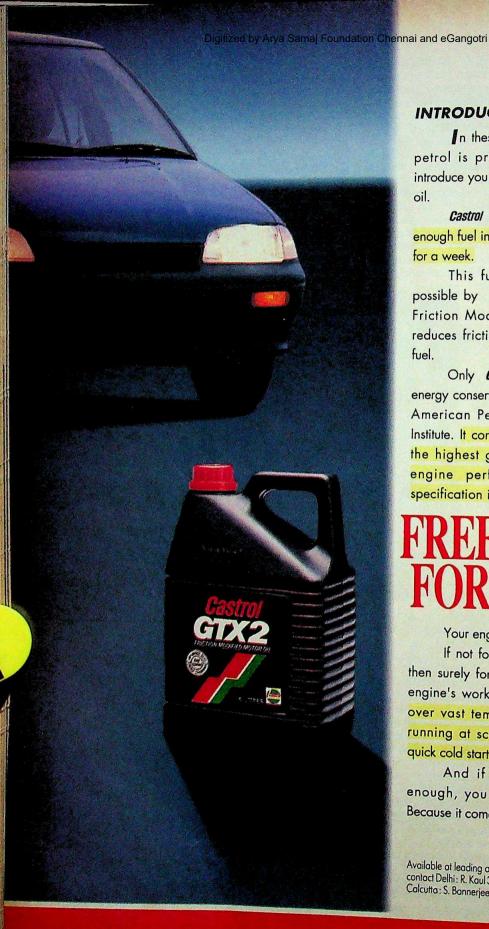
Bravado: People said Advani has bhagwan on his side. But the real Ram advised me this man's a fraud. Go floor him. So I tied my langot, did some push-ups, and grabbed hold of Advani. The next second he was flat on the ground, floored. The world realised he's no bhagwan.

Disdain: Why shouldn't I campaign in my helicopter? Isn't Mulayam using one? Rajiv has three. And Chandra Shekhar has his jetuva (jet). Hum chief minister hain—paidel chalenge kya (I'm chief minister—will I walk)?

Hope: You, the downtrodden, have a chance to get power. Power today is power of the pen. With one stroke I've written off tax on fishermen. Tree tax, on toddy tappers, was abolished. We promise you that power.

This is the final act, the piece de resistance. Is there a toddy tapper in the crowd, he shouts. A young man walks up. Laloo points to the calluses on his bare chest from climbing date-palms. "Does he now pay excise or bribe?" The man says no. The crowd cheers. Laloo counts the constituency as "taken".

—SHEKHAR GUPTA



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calibre of a Laloo Yadav. Except for V.P. Singh and Ajit Singh and even Ajit's influence is confined to pockets of western Uttar Pradesh—no other leader has the charisma or western that to convert enthusiastic party supporters into committed party workers.

y.P. Singh scoffs at the importance of a well-oiled party machine, arguing that "the people are our organisation". But he is either being naive or disingenuous. Any party needs much more than just slogan-shouting youths to manage the enormous electoral battle in a mammoth state ike littar Pradesh. A party like the Congress(1) even at the eleventh hour can find workers to look after the booths because it still has a traditional and experienced work-force at the grassroot level in the villages.

Apoorly-managed election could hurt the party signifirantly not only in the OBC belts where vote divisions are likely to occur between the Samajwadi Janata Party, BJP and Congress(I) candidates, but also in its other potential vote bank: the Muslims. The Janata Dal has been counting on outright wins in the 22 Lok Sabha and 105 Vidhan Sabha seats which have a more than 20 per cent Muslim electorate. But because of its visibly downbeat image, some Muslim leaders are talking about turning away from the Janata Dal. With their main objective of defeating the BJP uppermost in their minds, they would not like to vote for a party whose candidates appear to be losing the battle.

HIEF Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav is also capable of cutting dangerously into the OBC and the Muslim vote banks on which Singh is depending. Muslims were particularly impressed with Yadav's firm handling of the VHP last October. Any shift in the Muslim vote bank away from the Janata Dal could badly damage the party's prospects. Rasheed Masood, Ajit Singh's lieutenant in Uttar



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# Discordant Din

HE relationship between the Janata Dal on the one side and the regional and Left parties on the other is one of mutual dependence and varies from strong to fragile. From V.P. Singh's point of view, the Left's support enhances the pro-poor and left-of-centre image he Wants to give the Janata Dal. As for the Communists, they have their own reasons for supporting Singh. They have always cherished the ambition of influencing national policies. To this end, the new constituency of backwards and Muslims which Singh is hoping to cultivate is a crucial component for the Left.

KERALA: The CPI(M) is contesting in 75 assembly seats, the CPI in 24. The Janata Dal was given 13 and the other allies in 4.

allies in the Left Democratic Front got the remaining 28. WEST BENGAL: The cPI(M) needs the Janata Dal. Since the Congress(I) consistently reaps around 40 per cent of the cent of the vote, the leftists could not afford any split in their vote. their vote, the leftists could not another. It also suits the Left to stress the national issues of social in the left to stress the national issues of social justice and unity given their poor performance National Front leaders: divided family

in the state. The CPI(M) is contesting 30 of the 42 parliamentary seats. Its allies are in the fray for the rest.

TAMIL NADU: The relationship is under strain here with both DMK and Janata Dal feeling raw after nasty seat-sharing negotiations although Singh managed to coax Karunanidhi into giving him five Lok Sabha and 15 assembly seats.

ANDHRA PRADESH: The electoral chances of the Janata Dal's alliance with the Telugu Desam (TD) are threatened by the inroads being made by the BJP into its share of the vote. The TD is contesting 33 seats, with its allies fighting the rest, and it has made a point of fielding several backward candidates in order to shake off its pro-Kamma image.

HARYANA: Singh's pact with Bansi Lal's Haryana Vikas Party (HVP) is unpopular with state leaders and party workers. But the party's central leaders believe Bansi Lal will stage a come-back. Its dependence on him meant that Lal secured 61 of the 90 assembly seats while the Janata Dal contests 24.

ASSAM: The split in the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) has left the National Front fighting alone.

V.P. SINGH

# "Mandal is a key issue"

DURING his tumultuous tour of Maharashtra V.P. Singh spoke for an hour to Principal Correspondent ZAFAR AGHA. Excerpts:

Q. What are the election issues?

A. The main issue is of various social forces, the deprived sections, sharing the power structure. It is a much larger goal than merely an electoral battle.

Q. Critics charge you with trying to build vote banks on a caste basis.

A. They call me a casteist, all right. But tell me, even 40 years after Independence, how is it the lower castes, 75 per cent of India, are excluded from all important posts?

Q. It is a centuries-old problem and will fade away.

A. Yes. But nearly half a century has passed since Independence and despite promises, 75 per cent of India still does not find a place in the power structure. Allegations of being casteist are always made by the ruling elite.

Q. So do you dismiss it as propaganda against you?

A. No, it's a normal reaction. You don't have to blame them. We must try to explain to them that if this inequity continues, it may engulf them also. And now you see the measure of our success. Everybody now swears by reservations.

Q. You have lost your party base after the splits in your party.

A. We have a strong organisation in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Orissa. Also in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Gujarat. And may I ask, how was it that the last time a mighty organisation like the Congress was thrown out by us?

Q. Then the party was united.

A. Workers are still with us. Besides, people can think on their own.

Q. Some former party colleagues call you a hypocrite, trying to divide society only for electoral gains.

A. Whenever the deprived sections try to improve their lot, vested interests call them names. The attempt is to run down those who try for change.

Q. But Arif Mohammad Khan and Arun Nehru....

A. Precisely. Those who enjoy the benefits of an inequitous system, only they raise such charges.

Q. You claim to be fighting the BJP while you deal with Imam Bukhari and Syed Shahabuddin, whom Arif calls communal leaders?

A. Who has given these certificates (to Bukhari and Shahabuddin)?

Q. Well, don't these leaders talk about the aspirations of one community and not the nation as a whole?

A. A community is also a part of the nation. When I talk to a Buddhist religious leader, I am not labelled communal.

When I talk to Christian leaders, I am not called communal.

Q. Are you trying to convert this poll into a referendum on Mandal?

A. It is one of the key issues and we have set the agenda of this election.

Q. What about reservations for the economically poor?

A. We will reserve 5 to 10 per cent for the poor among the forward classes.

Q. What if no single party gets a clear majority?

A. The National Front and Lest axis will get a clear majority.

Q. Is there any possibility of the Janata Dal coming to terms with the BJP as in 1989?

A. There is no question of any understanding with the BJP. We are totally opposed to the BJP line.

Q. What about the Congress(1) minus Rajiv Gandhi?

A. It is not so important. You see, I had predicted a two-three years period of fluidity after the 1989 elections itself, when there would be a recrystallisation of forces. I am going to concentrate from May 27 itself on the recrystallisation of social forces in the country.

Q. The kind of social change you have spoken about has never been possible without bloodshed.

A. It is possible. There's been no riot on the Mandal issue. But if you continue

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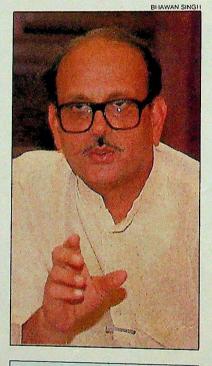
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to suppress social change, violence may erupt. It is happening in Andhra Pradesh. The Naxalites are basically Dalits.

Q. Violence may erupt in some other form.

A. That will definitely borner. Mobile Policy of the control of the

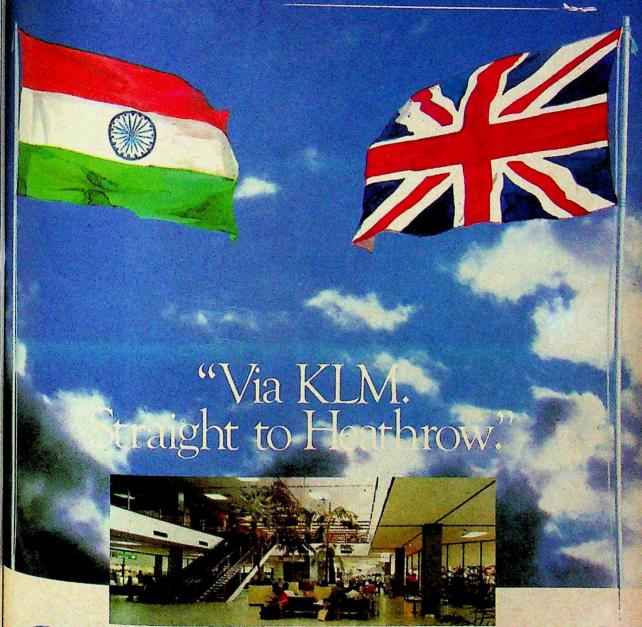
A. That will definitely happen. Mahatma Phule said whenever social forces are close to achieving their target of social change, there will be a communal problem. Why is the BJP suddenly concerned about the Ram temple? They are basically trying to divert the struggle for social change.



"There is no question of any understanding with the BJP. We are opposed to the BJP line as it will disintegrate the country."

INDIA TODAY . MAY JI. 1991

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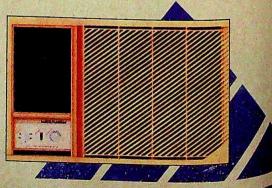
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pradesh, does not rule out the possibility of Yadav affecting prodesn, does his party candidates in central Uttar Pradesh. twasinfact this uncertainty about the Muslim vote that ompelled V.P. Singh to seek a public declaration of support compelled the Jama Masjid's Syed Abdullah Bukhari in exchange for the james a hand in the selection of certain candidates. Butthis has annoyed certain sections of the Muslim elite and berals who bridle at the idea of religious diktats as well as local Muslim leaders who are exploring the concept of "lactical voting" for candidates who seem to be capable of defeating the BJP.

For the southern states, where V.P. Singh is allied with be regional and Left parties, there is a different gameplan. Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and even Kerala have already passed through the Mandal phase of politics. What is exercising the minds of voters in these states is too much interference in their affairs by the Centre. The Vational Front here is now trying to sell federalism. Singh has been particularly aggressive against the Congress(I)'s role in the dismissal of the Karunanidhi government in Tamil Nadu. The move is to play up the regional "selfrespect" factor in these places.

V.P. Singh says he is now looking at the horizon beyond the election. Even if he loses, he intends to use the interregnum to build the National Front into a nationally acceptable political force with a mass base of backwards. minorities and Harijans—a vibrant and powerful alternalive to the Congress(I) and the BIP. He secretly hopes for a tidal wave of support for him as the "messiah of the deprived" just as Indira Gandhi did in the early '70s. But she had the intelligentsia behind her. Singh's problem is that he has burnt his bridges so finally with the middle classes and the intelligentsia that, no matter what new vote banks he succeeds in creating, these will remain forever lost to him. And India's politics has a record of confining national politicians whose stature is reduced to that of sectional leaders permanently to the wings.

V.P. SINGH CAMPAIGN

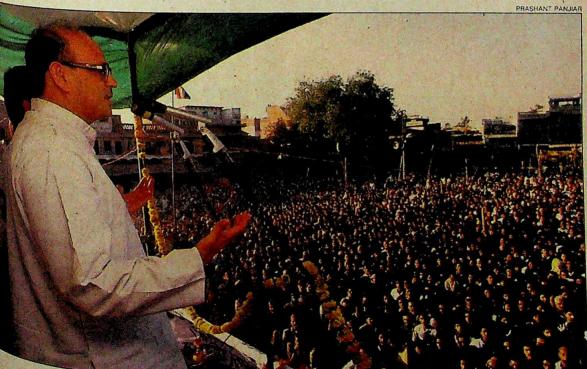
# **Bouquets and Brickbats**

### There is adulation from new strongholds, and rejection from the old

HERE'S a sparkling clarity to the strategy. Chase the "deprived 75 per cent of India" and promise them a share of the political spoils while snubbing the bourgeoisie which, in any case, has turned its back on you. The answer to whether it is working as an electioneering strategy is yes... and no. To date, V.P. Singh's campaign in the north shows the Mandal-masjid message fizzling out like a damp squib in some areas and working a treat in others.

When he arrives in the apparently God-forsaken Brahampuri in Maharashtra at noon the mercury is hitting 44 degrees Celsius. Before addressing the small hamlet of largely neo-Buddhists and Harijans, he goes to a rest house for lunch and a short siesta. While he rests, the town buzzes with the news of his arrival. And a huge crowd, the majority of them Dalits, sits down to wait below a relentless sun for a darshan of the Mandal "messiah"

His speech is liberally littered with eulogistic references to Dr Ambedkar. Singh tells the story of how it was his government that took the bold step of hanging the Babasaheb's portrait in Parliament. His punchline—"Parliament ki deewar main to jagha thee, par Congress ke dil main jagha nahin thee" (The wall in Parliament had more than enough space but the Congress(I) lacked the will)—has the crowd roaring its approval. Bhim Rao, a Harijan, speaks for



V.P. Singh campaigning in Malegaon in Maharashtra: the rhetoric of social equality

most of them when he remarks: "He has given us sammaan (honour) by putting up our hero's portrait in Parliament."

Further along in Aurangabad. Singh again keeps a huge crowd waiting in the heat of the mid-day sun. Aurangabad has a large percentage of Muslims who wait from 10 in the morning till noon. Using a combination of poetic flourishes along with the common man's idiom, he reverts again and again to the masjid: "Unhone kaha masjid girey gee nahi to sarkar girey gee. Hum ney kaha sarkar girey gee par masjid naheen girey gee" (They said either the masjid or the government must fall. I said the government can fall but the masjid will be protected). The tale of his "sacrifice" wins him a standing ovation.

In Maharashtra it seems the Mandal mantra is working amongst the OBCs. The response he elicits from Dalits and Muslims seems to keep the fatigue at bay. He has little trouble keeping up with his schedule, making a point of avoiding

Muslims seems to keep the fatigue at bay. He has little trouble keeping up with his schedule, making a point of avoiding lunch and sticking instead to boiled water and a supply of channa (gram). While he's travelling, Singh either reads or



V.P. Singh gheraoed at Lucknow airport by supporters of those denied tickels

snatches a snooze. The only personal note in his conversations 2. Party pr comes in Pune when he seems engulfed by memories of his student days. "Arre, abbhi ghoda swari yehan hoti hai?" (be saided supple still go horse-riding here?), he asks one of the local stated supple still go horse-riding here?), he asks one of the local stated supple still go horse-riding here?)

After Pune, the next stop is Nasik but he is told the air-sur has no landing facilities. Instead of cancelling the programma he opts to make the five-hour drive by car. It's after midnight

the reception 22. Party pr 12. Row, cau 23. Singh is 23. Singh is 24. Singh is 25. Singh is 25. Singh is 25. Singh is 26. Singh is 26.

réuses to do :

Last year, nearly 5 out of every 10 buyers chose a refrigerator from Kelvinator.

(A year or so later, the other half will also wish they had.)

tenhearrives but a crowd is waiting for him. His rhetoric is populist and rousing. He tells them how the Mandal are, populari are wand will turn a Mali, a Kurmi, a Teli, a Dhangad into a sone officer: "Lohe kee baidian to kati ja sakteen hain par man parman baidion ko katna Mandal aur Janata Dal ka kaam hai" to break the iron chains but to break the chains that greaged your souls is the job of Mandal and the Janata Dal).

swords go down a treat. Twodays later, he lands aia Uttar Pradesh where

In 10 days V.P. Singh has covered about 112 constituencies in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Delhi. He travels mostly by car. But in Andhra Maharashtra Pradesh. Tamil Nadu, he flew long distances in the Bihar Government Beechcraft hired by his party.

reception at the poorly-attended meetings is disappointat Party problems surface the moment Singh arrives in aknow, caused by massive confusion over ticket distribuin Singh is gheraoed for over an hour at the airport by the plated supporters of a Lucknow-mafia boss—one Guru Bux igh Bakshi—who was not given a ticket. He is harassed arailessly by Bakshi's supporters who insist that he make an accouncement there and then. A visibly-irritated Singh to do so without consulting his colleagues.

State leaders are eventually able to whisk him away to Bara Banki where a paltry crowd of 500 waits for him. At the same place and the same time the following day, the BJP's Sadhvi Ritambhara addressed a meeting that drew a crowd of over 20,000. Things go from bad to worse. En route to Faizabad, party workers have organised just two corner meetings-one at Chinhat and the other at Rudaulli. The turnout is poor-a far cry from Singh's

triumphant travels across Uttar Pradesh in the last election when his anti-corruption slogans roused the masses.

The same indifference was in evidence last month among the residents of his constituency in Fatehpur who failed to welcome the hero of 1989. An MP's trip to his home constituency is normally a huge morale-booster-a chance to submerge himself in an adoring populace who make him feel that he is the best thing that's ever happened to them. Singh has to do the adoring himself: "Fatehpur ki dhool ke sammaan ke liye main khud dhool mein mil gaya. Main vishwaas dilata hoon ke main aisaa kuch nahin karoonga ki ap ko sir nicha kar ke chalna pare (For the honour of Fatehpur I sacrificed myself. I promise I will never do anything which would make you hang your head)," he tells his people. On one occasion, he faced outright hostility and heckling from anti-Mandal students. Singh was not amused. Like any politician, he is buoyed up when he faces a good crowd as he did on May 12 in Deoria and eastern Uttar Pradesh where he was cheered on by frenzied mobs, and easily cast down when he faces a wall of indifference or hostility, as happened at Barabanki and Faizabad. V.P. Singh, it is clear, is on a zigzag course, hitting crests and troughs with dizzying alterna--DILIP AWASTHI with ZAFAR AGHA and AMRIT DHILLON







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**RAJIV GANDHI** 

# FRIENDLY BUT LACKLUSTRE

Confident and relaxed, Rajiv has rid himself of his earlier uncertainty and bumbling. But he seems to have failed to find the pulse of the masses.

By SHEKHAR GUPTA

OR a deposed monarch out to reclaim his kingdom, Rajiv Gandhi could not have asked for a better buildup. Shorn of security, shorn of the aloofness he exhibited in the past and displaying a so far unknown panache for mixing with people, the Rajiv on the 1991 campaign trail has come a long way from the Rajiv of 1989, with that defensive, on-the-ropes

look. The crowds just love it and so, it

seems, does Rajiv.

From Rishikesh, where the Ganga enters the plains, to Diamond Harbour, 70 km east of Calcutta, where it completes its journey to the ocean, thousands throng the streets not merely to see, but to touch the new Rajiv as he hop-skip-and-jumped across the country, averaging a dozen meetings and two

hours of sleep a day.

On the road, Rajiv is a leader in the Jawaharlal mould, ritually shooing away securitymen and mingling with the crowds. People yearn to see him from close, shake his hand, feel him, even push him around. At Calcutta's Park Circus he is mobbed on his way up to the stage. A young labourer, clad in a halfdhoti emerges from the stampede, dancing and shouting gleefully: "Itni bheed mein bhi maine use chhua." (Despite such a crowd I touched him.) Someone pulls out a fountain of the kind seen at marriage processions and begins spraying a thick jet of keora-perfumed water at Rajiv. Aghast, one of the securitymen covers Rajiv, taking the full blast of the liquid on his own face. He is promptly pushed aside and Rajiv stands smiling as his political baraati sprays to his heart's content. It is past midnight as Raiiv drives out of Park Circus but the streets are still full of supporters whipped into a frenzy by the thought of such informal proximity with royalty. Local policemen helplessly push back the surging crowds. But Rajiv jumps out of the open jeep and pummels them with blows. The policemen disappear. The crowds cheer,

Another one of the new Rajiv tricks that gives his securitymen the nightmares is the garland volleyball. Rajiv has perfected the and catching the garlands thrown at him by the crowds and the tossing them right back—with perfect precision in case be happens to see a woman in the crowds. On the streets he keep a look-out for women peering out of the balconies. By nowth when word has spread and wherever he reaches the crowds are with Punjab already waiting for the game. At Buxar, where former information and broadcasting minister K.K. Tewary is locked

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1 100gh three-way fight, the volleyball game consumes a a fought than the speech. And mercifully so for Rajiv is as off-Bihari audiences with his save-Punjab-frompanhic Committee appeal as he is on target with the

garlands. Rajivon the stage, actually, is a pale shadow of Rajivon the Always a poor speaker, he also has to carry the burden of wer lines. If he still wins the 1991 poll it definitely won't be rause of the speeches he has been delivering. In a grand atoral nautanki where an Atal Behari Vajpayee showers the ners with his inimitable repartee, where an Advani delivers monthly argued mcssage, where a V.P. Singh sums up the aust of his crusade devastatingly in pithy, Panchtantra-like Rajiv leaves the people cold. And confused. Or how else and the 40,000-odd Banarasis feel as he lectures them on sper 301 and intellectual property rights?

For the hoi polloi, he talks about the threats to national swity. The last time it happened, he says, was when Morarii lesal became the prime minister in 1977. He dismantled RAW ad the IB. and made the names of their officers public. The when Mrs Gandhi came to power, she found that on wth Punjab and Assam the intelligence reports were a day

behind newspaper reports. Rajiv also talks about how his absence from the South Block made India irrelevant on the stage of international diplomacy.

Till he switched over to foreign affairs the thrust of his speeches had indeed been Punjab. So much so that when he started speaking in Varanasi a startled youngster in the audience, who had seen him at other meetings in Uttar Pradesh, exclaimed: "Iski to tape hee badal gayee." (He seems to have changed his tape.)

UST a day earlier at Diamond Harbour, he had told a crowd of nearly 20,000 about the dangers of voting in a hung Parliament. For who will tackle the situation in Punjab where the new Assembly will be controlled by the Panthic Committee backed by Pakistan? Now, no one in Diamond Harbour seemed to know anything about the Panthic Committee. Predictably, no one reacted. Minutes earlier, the same audience-many of whom came from Satgachia, Chief Minister Jyoti Basu's constituency-had cheered wildly as a crowd-warmer spoke of the alleged misdemeanours of the Basu family: "I will not talk about Jyoti Babu's new-found love of capitalists. I will not speak about Chandan (Jyoti Basu's son)

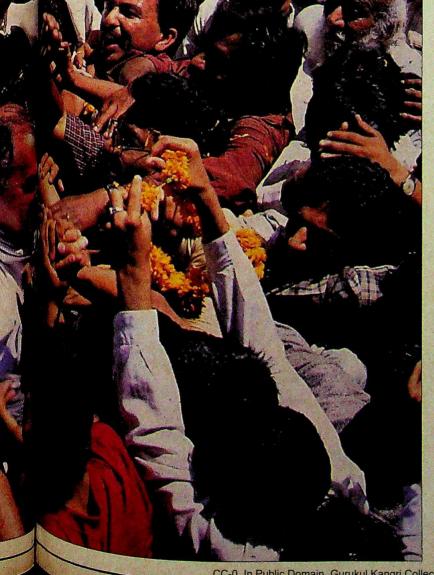
and his Britannia biscuit factory. I will not talk even about what Chandan does when he goes for a walk in the garden dressed in no more than a lungi. I will talk about load-shedding.'

The problem is, all along the campaign trail it does not seem like anyone is giving Rajiv advice on local issues and problems, even intra-party politics. This is where he stands in total contrast to his mother. She began most of her constituency visits with a little tete-a-tete with the local party bigwigs. Rajiv is a loner unable to relate to local politicians. unable to carry friends or aides because of the space crunch in the small helicopter. He jumps out of the chopper, commando style, in places that must seem strange to him, to save some precious seconds in his schedule that perpetually runs five hours late. And then delivers a message that often sounds foreign to the crowds. He does not seem to understand the difference between campaigning as a reigning prime minister, when just the power provides an aura to blank out the warts. From someone fighting back for power, people expect more rousing stuff; promises, hope and humour, in an idiom familiar to them.

Yet Rajiv carries on, hoping, perhaps with some justification that his new, informal style will do the one thing he admits he needs to do the most after 1989: re-establish contact with the people (see interview). That motivation is evident all along the drive out of Buxar to Varanasi along the Ganga and through Ballia, Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's constituency. The 150-km drive takes six hours and not merely because the roads, as Tewary puts it, are "impossible like Laloo Yadav". Rajiv is in no hurry either. He stops the motor-

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## Rajiv Gandhi at Rishikesh: no longer aloof



## ELECTION

cade in the middle of nowhere as he sees a family hunched over a dying calf, apparently knocked down by a speeding vehicle. He walks up to the family, "orders" an investigation in a state not run by his own party and trots back to the car. relieved: "Somebody knocked down the bachchda (calf). Thank God it wasn't us." Next, he stops at a dhaba at Jallapur, 85 km from Varanasi, sips tea from an earthen kulhar and stan talking to villagers.

Along with the tea, the aspiring prime minister with visions of the 21st century also gets to see a slice of the red Bharat. As local party candidate Lokpati Tripathi fidgets uncomfortably, Rajiv starts conversing with the local people

And as Meghnath Gupta the tea-shop owner, bolk pan after pan of tea th crowd of onlookers swelk Rajiv decides to ask the villagers what their prob lems are and immediately finds a remarkable your interlocutor. The conversation proceeds some what like this:

Rajiv: "Has much development taken place here?

Villager: "Nothing No schools. No health centre. No drinking water. Elections come and go. We have nothing in this village. The river comes every year and takes away whatever little we have.'

Rajiv: "How much land do vou have?

Villager: "Four to five mands.'

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A. Manipulation of votes, one way or another.

Q. What worries many Congress supporters i what's new in the party What held it back when you had a huge majority

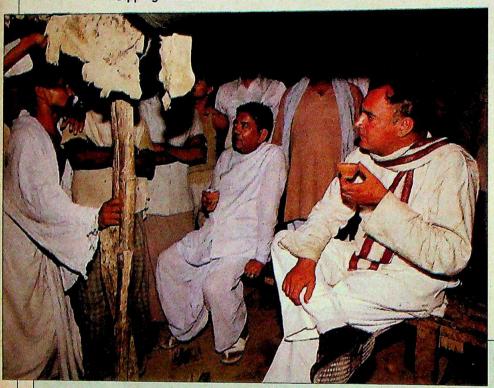
A. Look at what we did do from '85 to '89. When it inherited the country just after Indiraji's assassination everybody thought it was on the verge of break-up. Within few years we created a situation where almost no India thought India could break up. In fact, when we used that his in the election that this could end in giving the wrong vote a concoction government would end in the break-up of the country—nobody believed us. It was because we have created a situation of so much confidence.

Q. But why did you lose?

A. Somewhere, we lost communication with people This time we've put down clearly in the manifesto what it want to do, by when we want to do it.

Q. What else have you learnt from the defeat in 1891. A. Well, we have learnt how to get things done government which I was totally new to. You must remember I had no administration ber I had no administrative experience, I didn't know individuals in the administration or the political system

Sipping tea at a dhaba near Varanasi: new rapport



# "Somewhere we lost communication with the people"

THE road from Buxar to Varanasi is a nightmare, and cramped into the front seat of a Premier NE 118, Rajiv Gandhi looks tired. The endless speech-making, the constant dust have taken a toll of his voice, and he speaks in a hoarse whisper. The fatigue appears to have touched his spirits too. He is going through all the motions, but he does not sound like a man closing in for the kill, like a leader going for the electoral jugular. There seems to be no fundamental change in him since the 1989 defeat. Just that he has become more circumspect and, as he speaks to Editor AROON PURIE, appears to be taking care to avoid the pitfalls of brash declarations.

O. Do you sense any clear voting trends at this stage? A. We are getting a lot of support, there's tremendous enthusiasm. The hostility in the last elections has totally gone. So, in a sense, we're fighting on fair ground.

O. Do you think you will be able to form a government? A. Indications are we should get a clear majority but there are certain imponderables like what type of voting will take place in Bihar and West Bengal.

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170 constituencies in 15 states including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh. Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, and the north-east. Often Rajiv hops through three states in a day.

At Diamond Harbour

Raiiv: "What is a mand?"

Several villagers: "About one-third of an acre.'

Rajiv: "What do you do for a living?" Villager: "There is nothing to do. No job. The land yields very little.'

Rajiv: "Has no one tried to help you?"

Villager: "Who bothers. Our MLA comes here once in a while and sits here as you are sitting."

Rajiv: "Don't you tell him your problems?"

Villager: "Someone comes to our village from so far away, just once in a while. What is the point of loading him with your problems? What is the point anyway?"

Rajiv cannot provide any answers. But the next leg of his drive finds the local MLA sitting in his car. Rajiv reacts immediately: "What are you doing here? If you

want any votes, go back to your constituency.' As the convoy reaches the outskirts of Varanasi, it's time to change vehicles. Rajiv gets out of the Premier NE 118 and climbs into the open jeep, waving, smiling, throwing garlands. The friendly new Rajiv. Approachable. Touchable. The transformation from the uncertain, bumbling and aloof jeetenge ya loosenge days is total. And remarkable. If only someone could write better speeches for him.

Q. Your political advisers are still the same—R.K. Mawan, M.L. Fotedar, P.V. Narasimha Rao. So there's a feling of deja vu, that you are still the same.

A. There's a total change in the functioning and the Esponsibilities handed out. There was a total misconception The media about who was handling what earlier. It was just bithe buth. We also came under a massive media attack on be Bofors issue. There was no logic in the manner in which benedia functioned in that period. It was totally one-sided ad now, suddenly, it's become a non-issue.

Q.Your government also treated the media as though it anot that important. Doordarshan was quite blatantly ad to promote the Congress(I)—that's been fairly well tagnised. So can the media only be blamed?

A. I'm not blaming the media. I'm saying we came under <sup>lety</sup> severe attack and we lost credibility on that issue.

Q. What have you learnt from that? What are the recifics of Rajiv Gandhi in terms of governance which you be more careful about?

A. Well, one of the weaknesses in implementing our brannes last time was that we hadn't worked out the walles last time was that we hadn't worked to be with the detail. We only had concepts. We had the bureaucracy to bring about ork the details and they were in no mood to bring about dive change, so we ended up playing ping-pong.

Q. But are you clearer now?

A. We've done a lot of homework and are ready with a hylight programme of action. We were confident enough to put a time-frame in our manifesto.

Q. Earlier, you tended to do away with people Mrs Gandhi had used, people like Pranab Mukherjee and Dhawan, and then you reverted back to them. Is that some learning process you went through?

A. Many things said about them I found weren't true.

Q. Would you now delegate more responsibility to your

A. It is total media imagination. We had delegated almost completely to the ministries. Ask anyone who was involved with the Prime Minister's Office. He was involved in the decision-making involving ministries only when we'd sit down with the state governments.

Q. Why did you change ministers so often? Are you a bad judge of people?

A. Because they don't perform. Or if we want to use them somewhere else, in a state for example.

Q. Is there any change in you after '89? Do you have a different vision or a different view of people? You've been through a lot. Many close friends have left you.

A. Power opens a window to sides of people's character you normally don't come in contact with, even people you know well.

Q. Did it make you less trusting?

A. I don't think it has. Maybe a little more cautious.

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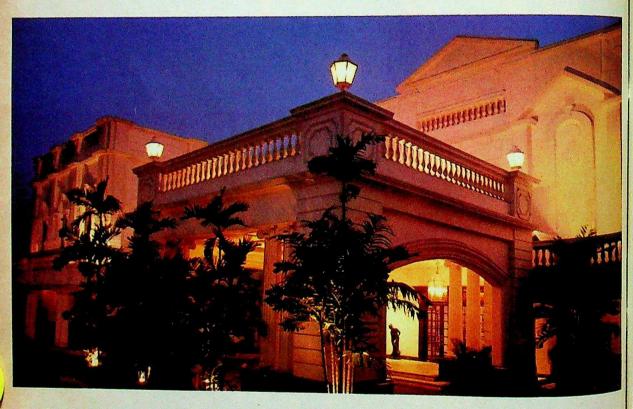
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# A SCORCHING CAMPAIGN

The hero of Ayodhya whips up *Hindutva* fervour and attacks 'pseudo-secularism' as he draws massive crowds in well-orchestrated election tours.

#### By SHAHNAZ ANKLESARIA AIYAR

The godman cometh. As the 70-scooter cavalcade of screaming saffron-scarved young men appears shimmering in the distance, the waiting crowdengulfs the road and the caravan is forced to a wobbling halt. The hordes charge towards a jeep just behind and leap in frenzy onto its bonnet to touch the white-haired man standing silently in the front. Some grab his hand, place it on their heads and a look of sheer contentment spreads over their sweating faces as they allow themselves to be pushed aside by others carrying marigold and rose garlands. The frail figure accepts their adulation, throws the garlands to them, then gives a half-beckoning smile to a group of women holding shining thalis (plates) as they struggle toreach him. An aarti is performed. Stretched fingers hastily put a tilak on his forehead before the women too are swept

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aside by the ever-surging crowd.

A companion whispers into hisear. Helooks up and folds his hands in greeting at men and women, leaning over their balconies, waving and smiling their approval. As the jeep starts crawling forward followed by cars and vans, people begin to run alongside chanting Jai Siya Ram and "Advani, Advani". Smiling police constables wave the procession onward. Those left behind are beaming as they savour their darshan of the 'godman'.

At the end of his two-day tour of the sprawling state of Uttar Pradesh, L.K. Advani remarks triumphantly: "The BJP lehar (wave) has become an aandhi (storm) which will sweep us to power in the state and Lok Sabha elections."

Others disagree. A DSP, watching a 5,000-strong crowd at a BJP meeting in a small Uttar Pradesh town, says cynically: "Advani is like a helicopter for the locals; he's a novelty, people come to see this hero." A shopkeeper adds:

Advani arrives at the Dehradun airport to a tumultuous welcome: high-profile electioneering



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#### ELECTION Appa Sama Foundation Chennal and examout AIGNERS

'Ram bhakti is one thing, politics another."

Whatever the reasons, all through western Uttar Pradesh and north Bihar, Advani has been drawing large crowds, who are anxious to see the hero of Ayodhya. Advani, however, insists he is not a religious person but a simple party worker, fighting "pseudo-secularism".

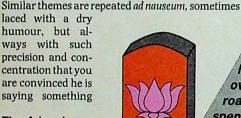
The BIP has outdone other parties by its massive mobilisation of workers of the RSS, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad and the VHP. All along Advani's campaign trail, they set up thousands of banners and posters, man water distribution stalls, provide jeeps and cars for the kilometre-long cavalcade and organise the meetings.

However, the party's principal campaigner appears a man obsessed with a mission—the capture of power at the Centre. To do so, he will explain his party's message as forcefully as possible, tolerating much that would seem repugnant to one who never bothered with religious rituals. Indeed, in all the temples which he now makes a point of visiting, he looks awkward allowing pujaris to guide him on. But all along his tours, he remains unruffled, almost detached from the screaming, chanting mobs. The only time he displays impatience is when he cannot find his suitcase of clothes in the car he is travelling in.

But once he mounts the podium, the detached persona metamorphoses into an earnest professorial neta who harangues, scolds and hectors his audiences.

laced with a dry humour, but always with such precision and concentration that you are convinced he is saying something

The Advant cavalcade: surging ahead



In the last month, Advani went on a barnstorming tour of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh covering over 15,000 km by air, train and road. He was scheduled to spend a few days in his New Delhi constituency where he has

campaigned for two days.

fresh and vital for the first time.

And the message? Vote for the BJP because it is the only party which stands for the unity of India and the protection of Hindu culture. In New Delhi, he dismisses his own election campaign by reminding voters that he was always available to them. Instead, he dwells on the BJP's stake to get a majority in Lok Sabha with 450 candidates. He urges every BJP voter to mail four postcards to his relatives, asking them to vote for the party. "And write on the top, Jai Siya Ram," he adds.

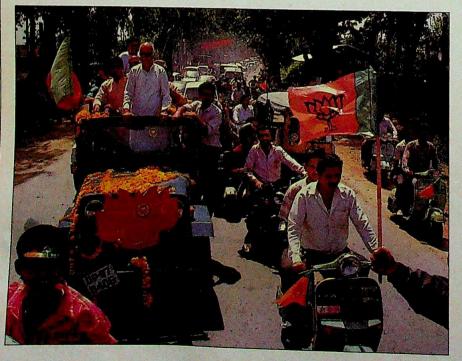
The BJP is not anti-Muslim, Advani painstakingly explains. For every other party, the Muslims are a vote bank not human beings. The Muslims must not be punished for the atrocities perpetrated by the foreigner Babar. The Muslims, in fact, have saved the Ayodhya temple by eschewing its use as a mosque for the past 40 years.

Once he even publicly chastises his followers for shouting Jo Hindu hit ki baat karega, who hi desh par raj karega (Only the one who promises to safeguard the Hindu interest will rule the country), and urges them to use the phrase Rashtra hit instead. At the same time, he does not utter a word of condemnation for the blatant communalism of BJP campaigners like Sadhvi Ritambhara. Only once when a party MLA driving him gleefully switches on the Sadhvi's cassette. does he say in disgust: "Switch off that nonsense!"

This is the first electioneering tour in which the austere leader changes cars more frequently than his sweat drenched kurtas. During the course of just one day in Uttar Pradesh, he moves from a Honda Accord to a Contessa and later to a Maruti 1000—all provided by the traders. jewel merchants and businessmen who are the core BIP supporters. As a counterpoint, the party has fielded

some humble RSS workers for the first time for the state assembly.

A surge of energy seems to propel Advani. Watching him harangue a Delhi audience at the end of a very gruelling day, his wife remarks: "He truly has bhagwan shakti. Yet, he knows nothing about the household. unpretentious This woman accompanies him in his jeep and his young son and daughter-in-law sometimes follow him several cars behind. But the leader is mostly oblivious of their presence. They neither demand attention nor receive it. But to those in the know it is only too clear that the mild-mannered Advani can no longer be ignored in Indian politics.



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#### CHANDRA SHEKHAR

# SANITISED CAMPAIGN

Caught in a strait-jacket of tight security and with nothing much to offer, the prime minister runs an insipid show.

By W.P.S. SIDHU

In the searing heat of the mid-day May sun, when the mercury hovers in the high 40s, the giant Mi-8 helicopter whips up a minor dust storm as it swoops down to land on themakeshift helipad. Policemen chase their caps, blown off by the downwash of the rotors, and the reception committee, clutching their garlands, scurry for shelter, while the local villagers watch this tamasha with a mixture of awe and amusement. The helicopter settles and out bounds Chandra Shekhar, ready to fight for the survival of his fledgling Samajwadi Janata Party (SJP) in yet another rural constituency of the Hindi heartland.

He shakes hands with the pilots for the umpteenth time and with his head bent low and eyes darting in all directions, marches briskly towards the reception committee, who have now regrouped and formed an orderly line. The local

candidate rushes up and touches his feet and is greeted with the familiar Bhojpuri greeting: "Ka ho." A motley group of party workers shout Veer Chandra Shekhar zindabad, zindabad. "See how loudly they cheer," says the local Lok Sabha aspirant. Retorts the Baba of Bhondsi: "Woh to theek hai. Lekin kuchch vote bhi milenge ke nahi?" (That is all right. But will you get some votes too or not?)

He waves at the sparse crowd of a couple of thousand, covering up his disappointment, and after being duly introduced launches into his standard speech. "You have to choose who will sit in Delhi's panchayat. You must do so fairly and not under fear or for money," he exhorts the rustic audience of Poorvanchal who, donning towels and holding umbrellas, listen sullenly, boredom writ large on their faces.

Then he plunges into the BJP, the party he rarely mentions by name. "When I was a child I was told that Ram could improve the lot of man. But here are some people who

Chandra Shekhar in Ballia, surrounded by security personnel: no enthusiasm

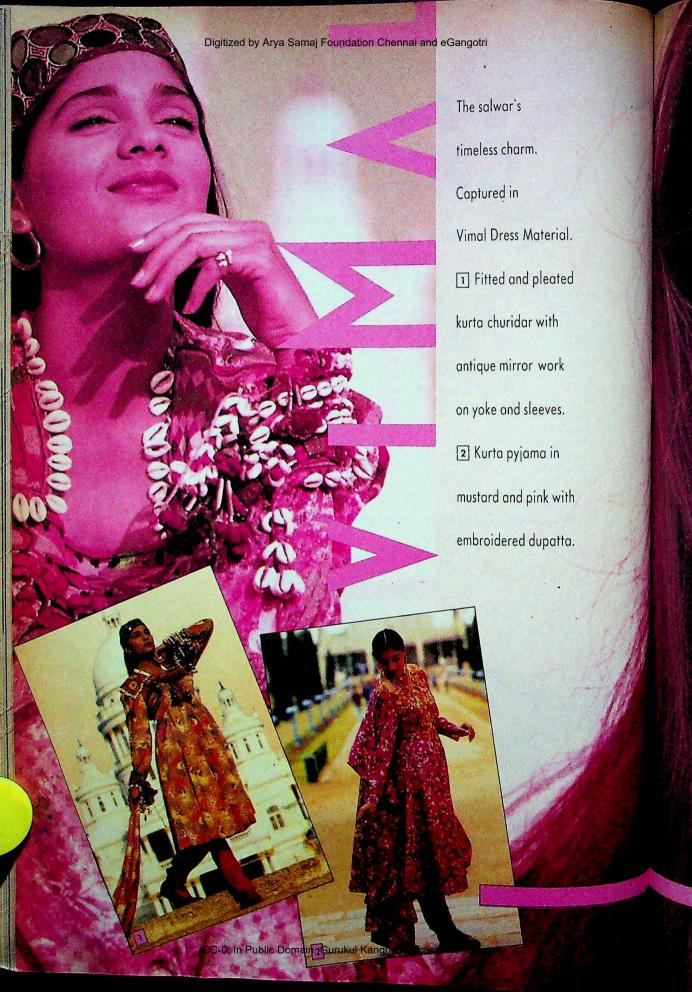


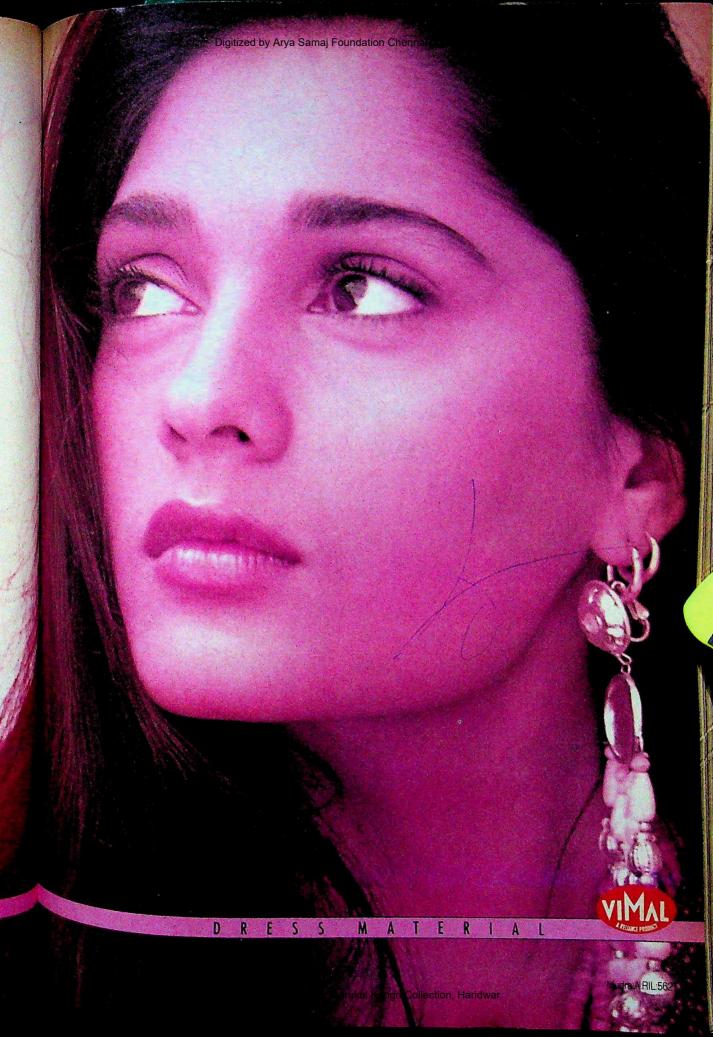
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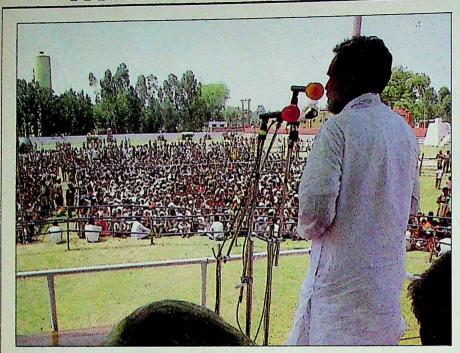
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are out to improve the lot of Ram himself!" And then he delivers the punchline: "Agar Ram ko dhoondhna hai to Shabri ke jootha ber mein dhoondo. Ram Parliament ya

assembly ki seaton mein nahin milenge.' (If you really want to look for Ram, you'll find him in the berries bitten by Shabri and not in the seats of Parliament or assemblies). This passage usually gets the loudest and most enthusiastic response

from the audience, be it in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana or Maharashtra.

But after a nearly flawless, lucid, extempore speech, he blunders when it is time to seek his pound of flesh. He turns to a slip of paper in his hand and tries to read the name of the local contestant without his glasses. And fumbles. And stutters. And stammers. The result: mispronounced names, which embarrass the candidates and amuse the audiences no end. At Lucknow, at a poorly attended meeting of a mere 1,000, Chandra Shekhar glances at a slip. Unable to read, he mutters: "Kaun hai yeh?" (Who is this?) The 'Yeh' in question is Mrs Hira Saxena, the Lok Sabha hopeful, who is standing a couple of feet away. He finally mumbles the name incoherently bringing the house down with laughter.

Time and again the gaffe is repeated. The charisma then begins to fade. Gone is the sparkling wit and verbal lashing that devastated his political opponents and mesmerised his audiences. The man who was once so easily accessible now keeps his distance from the public. He travels in a closed car. instead of an open jeep. Has he given up the fight even before it has begun? I wonder.

Next morning I get the answer. An itinerary of 14 meetings is thrown haywire as bad weather forces the VIP Boeing 737 to land at Bagdogra. Chandra Shekhar accepts the fait accompligracefully, but the security chief is unhappy.

#### Addressing a meeting in Rohtak

Cath

Orie

"Bagdogra not sanitised!" he complains.

That one word-'sanitised'—sums Chandra Shekhar's campaign perfectly. The entire programme is so designed that there is hardly any personal contact with the public. Chandra Shekhar the politician has been trapped in the prime ministerial strait-jacket. Keen on playing the role of an elderly statesman to the hilt, he is, clearly, unwilling to sully his clean image by mudslinging electioneering. The result; his biting sarcasm and earthy humour, which swayed the provincial crowds on

> his side, is missing.

Since May 1, Chandra Shekhar And why is he keeping aloof has been on a whistle-stop tour from the public? "If of 10 states including Bihar. I do that I cannot keep up with my programme of 10 to 12 meetings a day. Besides, we can only push the securitywallahs till a point. That is a handicap."

At Godda he learns of the sudden death of Gauri Shankar Rai, his school friend and political compatriot for the past 46 years.

Rai, who remained in the Janata Dal even after the split, died of a heart attack in Ballia. The desire of the principal sp campaigner to see the body of his departed friend and act as his pallbearer and his eventual decision to divert to Ballia forces him to skip eight public meetings that had been widely publicised in the local papers.

Maharashtra and Karnataka.

logging 30,000 km. He will close

his campaign with Uttar Pra-

desh and Haryana, where his

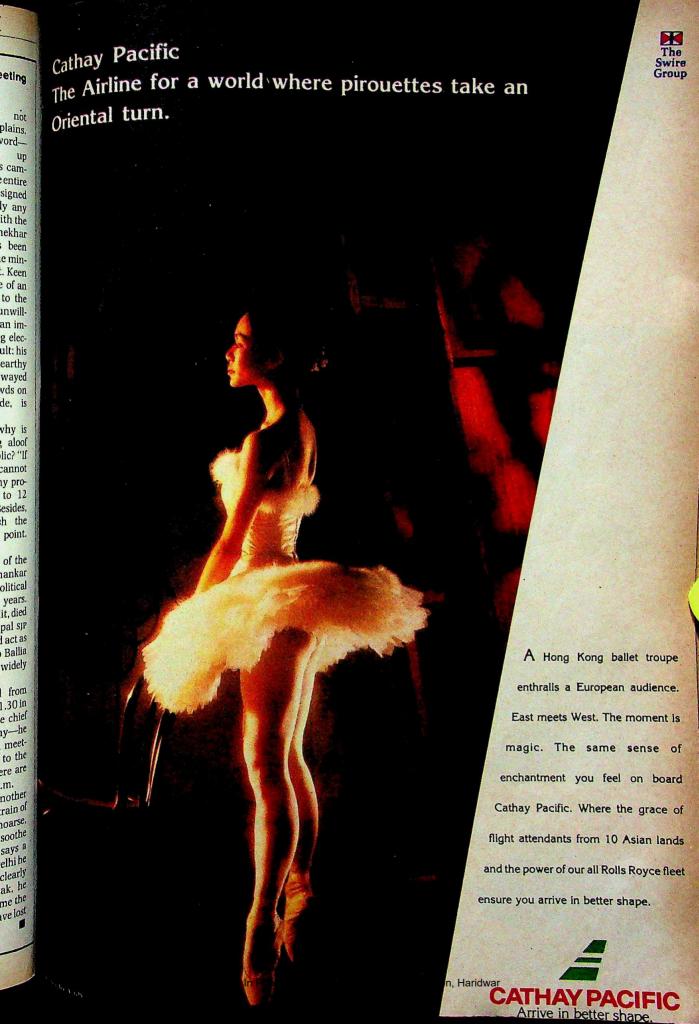
party hopes to win some seats.

He will regularly halt at his

own constituency, Ballia.

He picks up his interrupted campaign trail from Dharbhanga at sunset and returns to Delhi around 1.30 in the night. The next day, at the crack of dawn, the chief campaigner is out again. The following day—a Sunday—he barnstorms Haryana, covering 12 poorly attended meetings. Returning to Delhi at 11.00 p.m. he rushes to the Doordarshan studio to record his speech. Then there are official files to clear. The day finally ends at 3.00 a.m.

Waking up just three hours later, he sets off on another strenuous trail. This time to Maharashtra. But the strain of the feverish pace begins to show. His voice, already hoarse, begins to crack. "We have been giving him honey to soothe his throat. But it does not seem to be helping," says a concerned member of his security. On his return to Delhi he is visibly exhausted. The lines of his 63 years are clearly discernible on his weary face. Barely able to speak, he whispers: "I think I've lost my voice." But by the time the elections are over Chandra Shekhar would clearly have lost more than just his voice.



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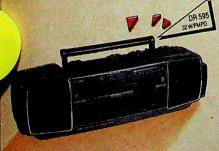
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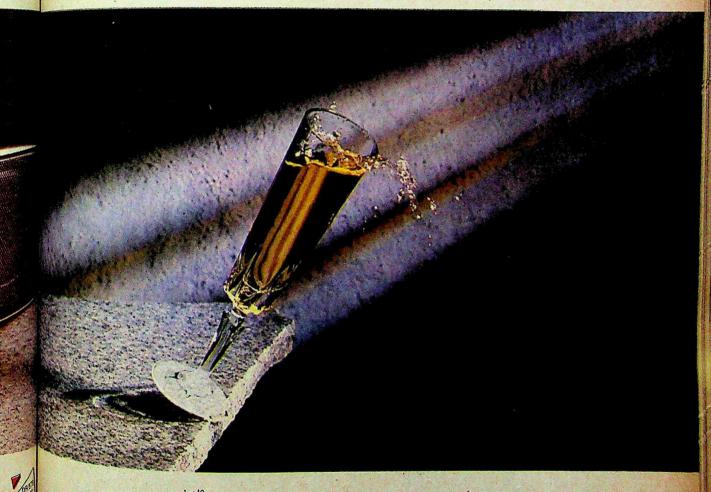
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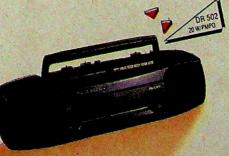
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THE AIR ASSAULT

# AGE OF THE JETSETTERS

All the star campaigners of the 1991 elections—Rajiv Gandhi, L.K. Advani, V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar—are literally flying high. Air-borne for at least four to five hours a day, the political jetsetters are racing against the clock in a frantic effort to cover the country.

By W.P.S. SIDHU with bureau reports

THE maharathis of the 1989 hustings have sprouted wings. And in the battle for the 1991 ballot, they are literally flying high. All the star campaigners of the 1991 elections-Rajiv Gandhi, L.K. Advani, V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar—currently resemble political jet-setters. being air-borne for at least four to five hours each day, hopping from one constituency to another in the frenetic race against time.

In past polls, only the caretaker prime minister had the luxury of an exclusive aircraft for electioneering, while the

other contenders were at the mercy of Indian Airlines or Vayudoot to get them to their electoral destinations. But faced with a snap election—and comparatively limited campaign time—all the three major parties—the Congress(I), the BIP and the Janata Dal-have hired private aircraft and helicopters to enable their star campaigners to cover the maximum ground. Thus a key element in the electoral fray, apart from the air-borne leaders, is a total of eight aircraft and nine helicopters. According to one estimate, till the time of polling these machines would have chalked up close to 2,000 flying hours, touching down at such remote air strips like Gondia. Begusarai, Bolangir, Deesa and Purnia.

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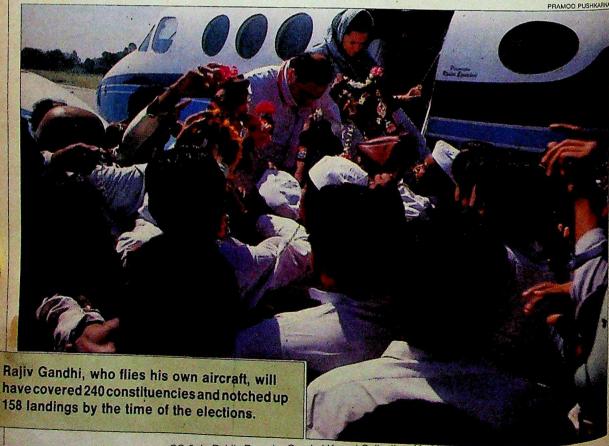
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The first party to acquire private aircraft was the congress(I), which is hardly surprising considering Rajiv's background. Another important factor was that he wishin background with one joystick—cover a lot of campaign and while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging up the flying hours necessary to keep his ground while logging hours necessary to keep his ground while logging hours necessary to keep his ground while logging hours necessary to keep his ground hours necessary hours necessary to keep his ground hours necessary hours necessa

pilots incended after elections were announced, the party hird two six-seater C-90 King Air aircraft from the Delhi Flying Club. One aircraft is used for the star campaigner Rajiv Gandhi and his close coterie, while the other transports his scurity men and the accompanying media. The hourly rate for each aircraft is Rs 10,000. While two pilots of the club were also part of the deal, Rajiv Gandhi chooses to commander the aircraft himself. Pouring over the map in the cockpit, finding remote airstrips. Gandhi is the quintessential pilot. He even peppershis conversations with the control tower with a liberal dose of 'sir'. Says he: "I love flying. It relaxes me."

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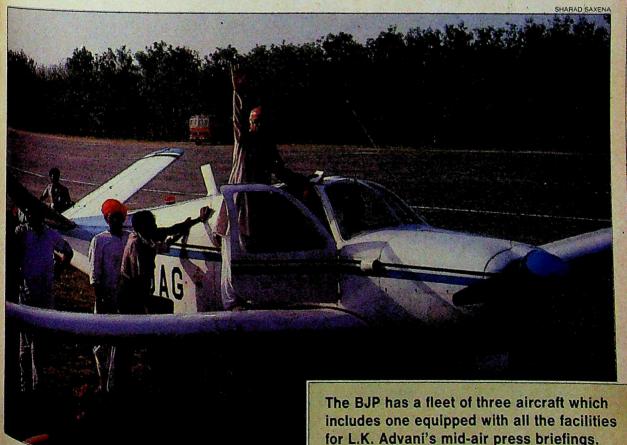
The aircraft has not been modified to cater to the whimsical needs of its user. Instead, the only items of luxury are the stored tandoori chickens and crates of chilled soft drinks on board. Using the aircraft to reach remote airstrips from where he moves by road, Rajiv Gandhi will have covered 240 constituencies and notched up a total of 158 landings till the time of polling. Later, as the pressure of campaigning built up, the party also hired two five-seater helicopters—an Ecrueil AS-350B and an Alouette III—from Delhi-Gulf Airways.

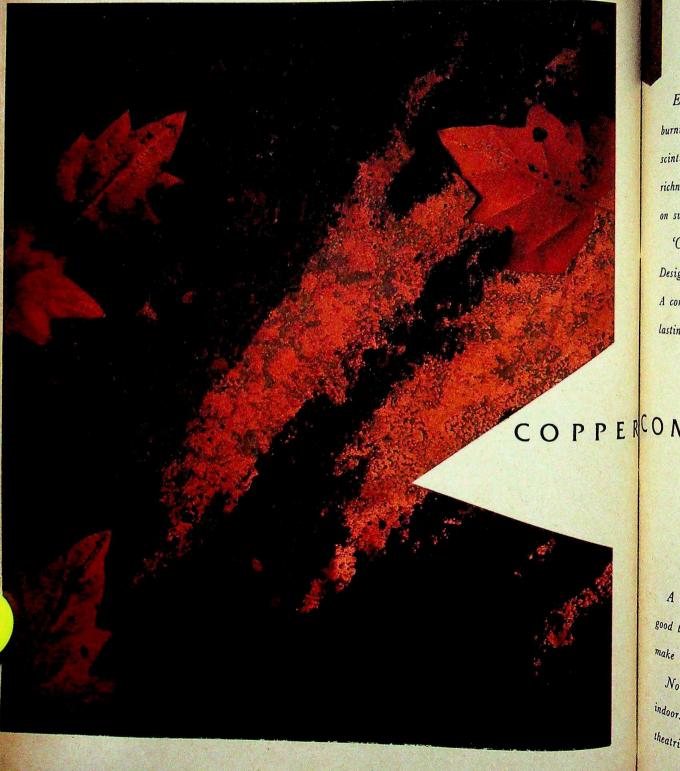
For V.P.Singh, the star campaigner of the Janata Dal, the Mandal message is obviously quicker by air-mail. According to party spokesman Jaipal Reddy: "In the last elections V.P. Singh could campaign only in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. This time with the aircraft, we hope to cover all the 300 odd stats we are contesting."

The party has acquired the services of the Bihar state government-owned C-90 King Air but through rather dubious circumstances. The party justified going for a state aircraft instead of hiring one from the private sector on the pretext that aircraft and helicopters available in the private sector could be tampered with. While party officials claim that the Janata Dal will pay for the aircraft at a rate of Rs 5,000 per hour, sources in Patna reveal that the party had worked out a unique backdoor arrangement to get the aircraft virtually free. A minister of the Bihar government books the aircraft in his name, making its use 'official'. It is then used by V.P. Singh or other senior party leaders. Among those who employed the aircraft for filing nominations were Syed Shahabuddin and Sharad Yaday.

HE six-seater aircraft has not been modified. The onboard facilities include an abundant supply of cold boiled water—a requirement that the Raja of Manda insists upon. The plane, which is now exclusively ferrying V.P. Singh on his campaign trail along with some journalists, makes an average of two to three landings per day. Thus till the elections are over the aircraft will have notched up around 40 to 50 landings—the lowest among all the political parties. Explains Reddy: "We are using it more to cover long distance journeys where the domestic flights don't suit us, rather than for campaigning."

It is, however, the BJP that has the slickest private air operation. The party has hired three aircraft—two 16- seater vintage DC-3 'Dakotas', belonging to the Singhanias and a three-seater Bonanza. The Dakotas are a prize catch because they have comfortable interiors, including a sleeping couch and a conference facility. Advant uses these facilities to catch





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up on his reading or sleep or hold mid-air press conferences. In addition, there are two helicopters, a six-seater Chetak and a Hughes. While the Dakotas have been hired at an hourly rate of Rs 10,000, the helicopters cost the party Rs 15,000 per hour.

This fleet of six machines is being systematically used for an average of four to five hours a day to shuttle 19 key leaders, including L.K. Advani to different constituencies. Ensconced in one of the back rooms of the BJP office is Piyush Goyal, a 26-year-old chartered accountant, who is running the entire travel operation. Says he: "We have used a computer to mesh the programme of our aircraft with the road and rail plans of all our leaders. This is to optimise the use of the aircraft."

Just how optimally they will use the fleet is evident from the fact that in just 11 days the leaders will be able to cover 370 of the 470 seats that the party is contesting and would have totalled around 300 landings. This would be a vast improvement over the campaigning in the last hustings, where the party leadership, according to General Secretary Govindacharya, was able to visit only 140 of the 226 seats it contested. But the BJP's 'air force' is not without its hitches. Says Goyal: "We were confronted with a shortage of licensed Dakota pilots." In fact, owing to this shortage, one of the flights was commandered by Vijaypat Singhania himself.

Of the four star campaigners, Chandra Shekhar is the

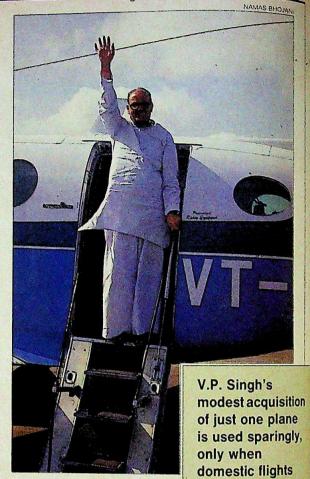
only one to use jets and has done the most amount of flying using the vast resources of the Indian Air Force. At his disposal are two

Chandra Shekhar
will cover over 300
constituencies,
some of them
more than twice,
and end up with a
staggering total

of 400 landings.







modified 50-seater Boeing 737 jetliners of the VIP squadron—the *Rajhans* and the *Rajdoot*—and a fleet of three Mi-8 helicop-

ters, which together carry around 30 passengers. The Boeings ferry the Prime Minister's party to a central airport from where they set off in the three helicopters. There is one for Chandra Shekhar and party officials, a second for the security personnel and a third for the media. Under the rules, after April 2, only the Prime Minister, his officials and his security travel on government expenses. The rest of the passengers, including the media, have to pay for their passage. Perhaps that is why the number of journalists accompanying the Prime Minister has dropped dramatically. By the time campaigning comes to an end. Chandra Shekhar would have covered well over 350 constituencies. some more than twice, and notched up a staggering 400 landings. Says Shekhar: "I have done more vigorous campaigning in the past, but this time it is more comfortable and I'll be able to cover more areas."

don't suit his

itinerary.

With all the facilities—conference rooms and dining areas—available on board, he has virtually moved out of his residence at 7. Race Course Road and into the VIP fleet. In fact, on an average he spends most of the day in the aircraft or in the helicopters. On board he clears files, confabulates with party leaders, occasionally reads and cat naps when the flight is a long one.

Clearly, in this election all the leaders have realised, much to the chagrin of their party treasurers, that flying is essential. The jet-setting politician has finally arrived.

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Strance has been revised to offer better
stils, with no increase in the premium

boice to existing Mediclaim
plicyholders to opt for revised terms,
wided no claim is reported till
lach 31, 1991.

hreased limits for hospital room charges.

Attention intensive care and domiciliary

Applialisation benefits.

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#### BENEFITS & ANNUAL PREMIUM TABLE (in Rs.)

Description			Cate	gories		
	I	II	Ш	IV	V	VI
BENEFITS PER PERSON						
I Hospitalisation benefits:						
i. Per day not exceeding:	B . T					
a) Room, board, nursing.	750	550	350	250	150	100
b) Intensive care,						
board, nursing.	1500	1100	700	500	300	200
Aggregate limit for						
(a) & (b).	33000	24000	15500	11000	6600	4500
ii. Surgeon, anaesthetist, medica	1	<b>西</b>		*		
practitioner, consultant,	1523				Town !	
specialist.	22000	13200	9200	7000	3000	2600
Anaesthesia, blood, OT,						
medicines, drugs,						
radiotherapy, etc.	28000	16800	12800	9000	5000	3400
I Domiciliary Hospitalisation:	450				4	
(Non-surgical treatment only)						
Medical practitioners, consultants, specialists.	6000	0500	27.00			
	0000	3500	2500	1600	1400	1400
Blood, oxygen, diagnostic material, nurses & related	2.					
expenses.	7500	4500	3000	2000	4000	
II Personal Accident:	7300	4300	3000	2000	1700	1700
Death or permanent						
disablement.	150000	100000	75000			
ANNUAL PREMIUM PAYABLE	130000	100000	/3000	Section 1		
SCHEME A						
Mediclaim and	2007	* 35				
Personal Accident Insurance	1500	950	700			
SCHEME B	1300	330	700			
Mediclaim			ALC: NO.	77	1000	100 S 100 S

Note: 1. The table above is only indicative. For full details, see Mediclaim policy.

Pre-existing diseases that the insured is aware of at the time of taking the policy, are specifically excluded.

Tax Relief: Under Section 80D of the Income Tax Act, premium paid by cheque upto Rs. 3000 is deductible from taxable income.

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STATE ASSEMBLIES

# OF CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE

As campaigning for the five state assemblies and one Union Territory reaches fever pitch, the Congress(I), National Front and BJP carve out their fiefs. INDIA TODAY correspondents report







(From left) Tiwari; Mulayam Singh; and the VHP rally in Etawah: final show-down

UTTAR PRADESH

#### **Head-on Collision**

BJP and Congress wrestle for the jewel in the crown

strange phenomenon is under way in Uttar Pradesh. The Tthree major parties—the BJP, the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal-have thrown themselves into the Vidhan Sabha elections with greater fervour than they have for the Lok Sabha contest. In many cases, this fight is turning out to be more prestigious than the Lok Sabha one. Part of the reason is the figure of Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav. Each party has its own reasons for gunning for a show-down with him.

The BJP-VHP combine wants to avenge the tough action Yadav took against kar sewaks in Ayodhya. The Congress(I) wants to settle scores with him over his dissolution of the

assembly despite its support. Finally, V.P. Singh wants to punish Yadav for his crucial role in master-minding his government's downfall. If all his enemies are going in for the kill, it is because they can smell blood-Yadav's position has changed from that of a minority government chief minister until April to the leader of a finy band of 90-odd MLAs in a House of 425.

The BIP is at least a month ahead of the rest of the campaigners in its electioneering, thanks to its strong, cadre-based organisation. It's a different story in the Congress(I) and Janata Dal camps where

things are thoroughly in a shambles exacerbated by numer ous last-minute changes in the nominees in the Congress(I) case and in the Janata Dal's by the delayed announcementa its candidates.

The BJP is making a point of fielding 26 per cent of OR candidates. This could hamper the chances of the Janata Da and the Samajwadi Janata Party (SJP) because their vote bank mainly comprises of the OBCs. The Congress(I) has also responded by increasing the number of its OBC candidates from 11 per cent in 1989 to 18 per cent. So the parties hard rather stolen the thunder of the Janata Dal by giving so many seats to the OBCs when its main hope and plank is Manda

Though the present situation is unlikely to undergo a sea change, things will certainly hot up in the last week when the Congress(I) traditionally pulls out all the stops. Only the solid backing of the 16-per cent Muslim electorate can bring the Congress(I) back to a commanding position and such happening, though a little unrealistic, is by no mean impossible. For Muslims seem to be veering round to the view

that if the Janata Dal shows no chance winning they would be better off throwing in their lot with the Congress(I). And I many constituencies the traditional Con gress(I) vote banks, especially the Han jans, are looking towards the Congress again as it promises a halt to rising price and offers greater stability. The key chi lenge before the Congress(I) is to campaign vigorously and to get its own vote out

In the final analysis, the Uttar Prades Assembly contest, it seems, will be a mi of strength between the BJP and the Congress(I) with the Janata Dal coming a poor third.

#### KEY TRENDS

- Unmatched BJP campaign
- Congress(I) trying to catch up
- Janata Dal in a disarray, lags behind
- Mulayam Singh Yadav playing spoiler

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# Cáshing in on MGR

Helped by Karunanidhi's rhetoric, DMK gains speed

r jayalalitha had hoped to take the lead in electioneering in the state by announcing her candidates' list earlier than the est and hitting the road promptly, her arch rival and DMK did Karunanidhi has proved her wrong. Despite wrangling with the Janata Dal's state unit over seats and getting his act mether rather late, Karunanidhi and his men are ensuring hat their campaign is as vigorous as the AIADMK's.

Karunanidhi's attack on Jayalalitha is direct. He tells his audiences that he is in a pitiable state to be fighting against sich an insignificant person when he has taken on figures schas Rajaji, Kamaraj, Indira Gandhi and MGR: "Now I have b oppose this woman, a mere novice."

Then he turns on the emotion. "Injustice has been done to me by people in Delhi who succumbed to the designs of this woman," he says. On the LTTE issue, he has decided that

offence is the best form of defence. "They sylam anti-national," he remarks, "but my dear ones you must decide. During Indira Gandhi's time 32 training camps for the Tigers were run here. And the then tate government gave them Rs4 crore for bying arms. I merely gave food and nedicine to fellow Tamils. If helping anther Tamil is a sin, Karunanidhi would the to repeat it." When it comes to thipping up passions, he has no equal.

Following his competitor Jayalalitha on the campaign trail is like listening to a markrecord. The same speeches, the same dogans. One of her favourite themes is to





Jayalalitha (left); Karunanidhi: epic confrontation

accuse Karunanidhi of trying to liquidate her. "Will you do justice to me by trouncing Karunanidhi and his evil party?" she asks the crowds. Karunanidhi is dubbed the "evil genius" who would have looted the state had he continued in power.

The DMK is also using MGR to woo the masses as liberally as the AIADMK. By admitting MGR-aides such as S.

Thirunavakkarasu K.K.S.S.R. and Ramachandran who formed the AIADMK II, the рмк appears to have got a free hand in using MGR's name. Karunanidhi calls MGR his old friend. Interestingly, both Jayalalitha and Karunanidhi have been drawing huge crowds in areas dominated by the Vanniyars, where the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) hopes to have an impact. The ambitious РМК is contesting in over 200 of the 234 constituencies while the AIADMK is fighting in only 168 and the DMK in 171. For the chief contenders the battle for Fort St. George is proving extremely arduous.

#### KEY TRENDS

- Jayalalitha losing the early lead
- Karunanidhi campaign gaining steam
- AIADMK hurt by splits
- DMK reviving Tamil regionalism

#### **PONDICHERRY**

## The Tamil Nadu Factor

THE Congress(I) and its ally, the AIADMK, are hampered by continued dissension within their ranks. The Congress(I) more so with former chief minister M.O.H. Farokh shunted to contest for the Lok Sabha and PCC(I) chief P. Shanmugam replacing him as the chief ministerdesignate. Shanmugam will contest from the Cassicade assembly constituency, the fief of former minister P. Kannan. Both Kannan and Farookh, smarting from the blow of Shanmugam's resurgence in local politics, are No on an annugam's resurgence in local politics, of on annugam's resurgence in local politics, of one of the politics and says Shanmugam. "We have been getting a very good lesponse and says the politics of lesponse and will gain a comfortable majority.

While the Congress(I) has just about managed to put up a united front, the AIADMK has virtually come apart at the seams. Many of the 10 Jayalalitha nominees are new laces that appalled partymen. Former chief minister S. Ramasamula partymen. Former chief minister S. Ramasamy's borough—the Karaikal-South seat—was given to the Congress(I). An enraged Ramasamy has trived his erstwhile Pondicherry Maanila Makkal dunnand to create a headache for Jayalalitha.

The AIADMK may be a serious liability for the alliance, but the Congress(I) leaders are putting on a brave front. Farookh says that the Janata Dal is a bigger liability for the DMK. Nothing could be truer. The two had a protracted wrangle over seat-sharing and the Janata Dal got only six seats. With many among the general public and DMK partymen holding the squabbles within the Janata Dal responsible for the collapse of the DMK government, the Janata Dal might well pose some problems for the DMK front.

The rival campaigns have yet to pick up pace. It could be the searing heat. DMK leaders D. Ramachandran and Shanmugam only venture out in the mornings and evenings. Farookh has yet to begin in earnest. There hasn't been a single election rally so far. The Congress(I) is relying on a visit from Rajiv Gandhi to boost morale. Jayalalitha is not even going to show up as she considers Pondicherry a Congress(I) problem. "When Tamil Nadu has a cold, Pondicherry sneezes," says Charles Francis Raj, a wine merchant in Pondicherry, putting in a nutshell what is expected to happen in the Union Territory.

#### WEST BENGAL

## **Marx Alive and Well**

#### Jvoti Basu's charisma outshines all

THE Congress(I) is taking on the Marxist juggernaut with its hands tied behind its back. The internal bickerings that marked the selection process for its candidates emasculated its ability to win. The party's public stock took a sharp nose-dive because of its shenanigans. The animosity was embarrassingly evident at Rajiv's election rally at Diamond Harbour. Two factions clashed and the local candidate, Maya Ghosh, was reduced to tears in full view of the public.

A fortnight ago, the PCC(1) headquarters was ripped apart by disgruntled ticket-seekers and their henchmen. On step-





I.

Nayanar (left); and Karunakaran: narrowing gap





Basu (left); and Ray: mismatched

ping inside the party office one day. Ray was heckled and abused. He blamed the trouble on CPI(M)'s agent provocateurs.

This is not to say that the Marxists don't have dissidence within their own ranks but they have the sense to keep it private. The Marxists did their homework. Having realised that their report card after 14 years in power was hardly inspiring, they have chosen to emphasise national issues like secularism and communal harmony.

The electorate's disenchantment with the Left is the only positive feature for the Congress(I), not that it has had the wit to capitalise on it. But it will try to harness whatever public anger there is against the Left's unfulfilled promises.

Though heavily tipped to retain power, the Marxists are not entirely trouble-free. There are over 25 cp1(M) dissidents

in the race. The rebels have the potential to deny victories Marxist candidates.

But the CPI(M) refuses to reveal any anxieties. The rebels are dismissed as a minor irritant. The glib retort is: "If we can tackle as big a party as the Congress(I), do you think we can't take care of a few mayericks?'

#### 似些内众人员

### **Changing Equations**

#### UDF is once again back in reckoning

 ${f P}$ OLITICALLY unpredictable Kerala has once again shown that it is dictated by contradictions and anachronisms. The wily former Congress(I) chief minister K. Karunakaran seemsto have secured the support of the BIP to help the UDF in a battle which a few weeks ago seemed heavily weighed against them.

In the Badagara parliamentary constituency which re turned Congress(S) leader K.P. Unnikrishnan in five consecutive polls, the BJP and the UDF are supporting Ratna Singh, an independent. So also in the assembly constituency of Beypore The BJP is desperate to ensure the victory of its all-India Secretary, O. Rajagopal, who is contesting for the Lok Sabha from Trivandrum and its state General Secretary, K.G. Maran from the Manjeshwaram assembly constituency.

The Congress(I) leaders are quick to deny any such understanding. When asked if the Congress(I) would take the responsibility for the BJP winning a few seats, Karunakaran said the voter alone would be responsible. KPCC(1) President A.K. Antony thinks it is all a ruse of the LDF. Says he: "The bogey of the UDF-BJP link has been created by the LDF just to woo the minority vote. The Congress(I) cannot align with the BJP 20 it's our main rival at the national level." BJP leader L.K. Advant also insists there is no understanding with the Congress beyond the arrangement for the two seats. But few believe him. The feeling is, if it could do it in two, it could do it in all

The Congress(I)'s alliance with the BJP has rendered the UDF suspect and many Muslims might vote for the LDF even

though the Indian Union Muslim League is backing the upr. In a way this is exactly what the LDF hoping for and is going all-out to expose the pact. Points out CPI(M) General Secretary E.M.S Namboodiripad: UDF-BJP link is like two people desperately em bracing each other while drowning.

the eye cup

#### KEY TRENDS

- CPI(M) remains unassailable
- S.S. Ray makes little difference
- CPI(M) rebel candidates make marginal dents

#### KEY TRENDS

- LDF in for a big fight
- UDF in unholy alliance with BJP
- IUML back in UDF fold

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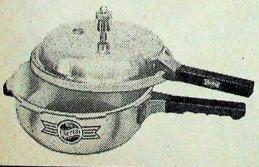
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YANA

# as Battle, Again

Tau in a corner as Bansi Lal gains ground

TOUR years has made a palpable difference. In 1987 the battle lines in the assembly polls were clearly drawn between the Congress(I) and the opposition forces marshalled ander Devi Lal. The Congress(I) then secured a measly five of be 90 seats. This time it is the Samajwadi Janata Party (spp). under Devi Lal, that is fighting with its back to the wall. The Haryana Vikas Party (HVP)-Janata Dal combine and the BJP are so in the fray. And no party seems to be leading.

The leadership issue has been the major concern of all the parties. Sensing the mood of the electorate, Devi Lal asked both



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(From left) Bhajan, Bansi, and Devi Lal: hazy picture

his warring sons, Om Prakash Chautala and Ranjit Singh, to withdraw from the contest. In the Congress(I), both former the minister Bhajan Lal and PCC(1) chief Birendra Singh are tonlesting and are sparing no efforts to pull down the other. The Janata Dal's decision to accept HVP chief Bansi Lal as this minister if it wins has alienated party workers. "Such a unender will distance us from the backward classes," four

kaders wrote to party President S.R. Bommai. The Congress (I) has fielded a large number of new entrants aduding former Speaker H.S. Chatha and 'Meham victim' Alland Singh Dangi. The BJP which polled 10 per cent of the last time will cut into the Congress(I)'s urban votes.

Local issues are featuring prominently. Bansi Lal has been KEY TRENDS

Devi Lal on the defensive.

Janata Dal demoralised BJP on the margin

Congress(I) squabbling Bansi Lalbids for power

asking people to opt for "vikaas or vinaas" (development or destruction). He also dwells on the development in Haryana during his tenure.

The voter is in a fix. If he goes for party leaders. Bansi Lal may pip the post. If he goes for individuals, the Congress(I) will benefit. If it is caste polarisation, a clear yerdict may not emerge.

## **Theocratic Tack**



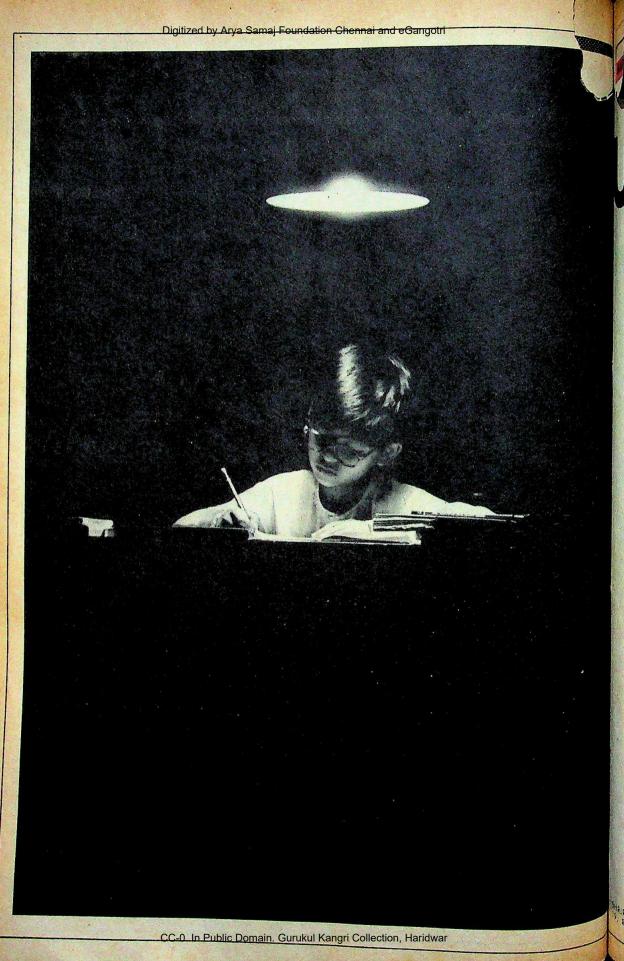
LAL Krishna Advani stroked his moustache, and then looked me straight in the eye. "I do not condone that," he said, "But it's an understandable Hindu reaction to pseudo-secularism." That was nearly two years ago, after the 1989 elections. He was responding to a question about vicious

anti-Muslim campaigning by many of his party's candidates. That was before "Jai Shri Ram" (the slogan) had replaced "Ram Ram" (the familiar greeting). I did not quite understand what "pseudo-secularism" meant. It had not yet become part of the intellectual lexicon. But it was comforting to know that the personable and reasonable Advani condemned minority-baiting as did many others in the party. The urbane and patrician Jaswant Singh even denounced the concept of Hindu Rashtra as an "abomination".

But from atop a rath the world may look and feel very different. Down below, in one of the most prestigious campaigns in the dustbowl of western Uttar Pradesh, the BJP's Swami Chinmayananda is electioneering with his Vidhan Sabha running-mate, K.S. Vaish. Or rather, the VHP is campaigning for them. They storm Soron, Kachhla, Sahaswan, Bilsi in a convoy of jeeps, vans, fiats, Ambassadors. Jagadguru Shankaracharya Saraswati Maharaj and VHP supremo Ashok Singhal are the star performers at the roadside meetings. They begin with the Jagadguru blessing the convocation. A warlike Jai Shri Ram is the opening line of his sermon on Hindutva. Then Singhal takes over. Do you know what Jai Shri Ram means, he asks the crowd. It means the vinash (destruction) of Ram viroddhis (opponents) who are poisoning the land. This land has been divided into Ram bhakts (believers) and Ram viroddhis. Ram bhakti means desh bhakti (nationalism). Ram viroddhis are anti-nationals. Minorities are multiplying like viruses. Hindus are asked to adopt the family planning slogan hum do hamare do (two children to a couple). Minorities believe hum do humare pacchees (25 children to a couple). If they do not join the Hindu nationalist mainstream, the Hindu Rashtra, they should quit the country. And Mulayam Singh Yaday, the biggest Ram viroddhi of all, should be renamed Mulayam Khan. Take another Ram viroddhi-Rajiv Gandhi. His father was a Parsi, his wife a Christian and he's a nothing. This is not a political rally, the Jagadguru and Singhal intone. We are not here seeking votes. We are here to create a Hindu Rashtra and the only party that will achieve this is the BJP.

The candidates do not speak. They are summoned centrestage where the Jagadguru blesses them.

Back in Bareilly, Advani is rebuking a party worker playing an incendiary Sadhvi Ritambhara Hindutva tape: "Turn offthis nonsense." In Delhi, K.R. Malkani is emphasising the party's opposition to theocracy. And in drawing-rooms across the country, the neo-Hindus of scuppledom are expostulating on the epistemological significance of the Rig Veda while the delicate weave of secularism unravels in the dustbowls of Uttar Pradesh.



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# HISH HAS AN THE DARK

There's a power cut in the neighbourhood. But Ashish doesn't know that.

While all his classmates are straining to read by candlelight, Ashish is busy studying undisturbed.

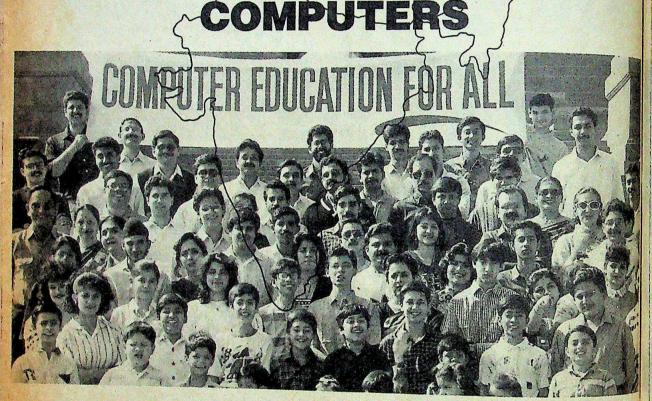
All because his home has the Bulldog protection - powered by the portable genset from Shriram Honda. This genset doesn't bark. It only bites. Chasing out power cuts without a noise.

What about your child? Is he one of Ashish's classmates? Or can he, like Ashish, see in the dark?

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**EMBARRASSING** 

THANKS to his frequent political somersaults, Gujarat Chief Minister Chimanbhai Patel has become the butt of many a joke. Cartoons taking off on his partyhopping have come up everywhere. One hoarding in Ahmedabad shows V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar

looking in despair while a sari-clad Chimanbhai is being escorled by Rajiv. The legend reads: Chimanbhai, a natroon chelloo che? (Is this your last widow marriage?) Even more embarrassing for Chimanbhai is the hoarding put up by

Yogesh Patel, an MLA of his own party, in Vadodara. Referring to the middlemen responsible for hiking the groundnut oil prices, it states: Chimanial, kaho kaun che tel no dalai? (Chimanbhai, tell us who is the middleman of oil?)

Despite severe pressure from Chimanbhai, Yogesh has refused to re-

move the hoarding. Says he: "My loyalty is first towards my voters. The day the groundnut oil price comes down. I shall remove the hoarding." Till then it stays.

#### **EUNUCH POWER**

SHIKHANDI the eunuch in Mahabharat may not have had many fans. One person's still campaigning for his lik: Gadahar Barik of Nikhil Bharatiya Shikhandi Mahasabha. But Barik is fated to lose in Cuttack. In the fray is J.B. Patnaik. Few men could take up his challenge let alone eunuchs.



#### **GRAFFITI WARS**

☐ IT was a jay-walker's idea of a joke, but the humour was wry. The BJP decided to corner some wall space in Delhi by writing "Vote for Shri ... ". The contestant's name was to be filled in later. But a passerby chose to scribble 'Shri 420'-common parlance for a cheat. Poll ironies!



#### READY REPARTEE

☐ THE verbal battle between the Left and the Right still carries on. If anything, the duel has been sharpened with the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections.

While addressing a public meeting in West Bengal's Salgachia area last fortnight, Chief Minister Jyoti Basu

Went hammer and tongs at the CPI(M)'s traditional rival, the BJP, charging it with raking communal passions

throughout the country.



When the septuagenarian Marxist leader objected to the huge pictures of Lord Ram adorning the rath of L.K. Advani, his logic seemed unbeatable. "Why did posters of Ram adorn Advani's rath?" Basu questioned. "Is Ram a member of the BJP?"

Well, no. But a BJP leader was quick with the repartee. Referring to the giant por-

traits of the two revolutionaries, Marx and Engels, displayed prominently at the party's meetings, he retorted: "Are they members of the CPI(M)?" Touche.



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Yeh kaisi sarkaren aayeen; Kamar tod mahengal laayeen; vapas lao Congress(I). (These governments that have come to power have brought back-breaking inflation in their wake; bring back the Congress(I).)

■ Congress(I) slogan

If there are such things as vote banks, the Congress would not have been winning elections for the last 40 years. If these imaginary caste and religious vote banks were there, why has not a single religious leader made it to the top?

M ARUN NEHRU



#### **NOVEL PROTEST**

☐ THE people of Koppal town in Raichur district on the Karnataka-Andhra Pradesh border have decided not to let sleeping MLAs lie. After their elected representatives failed to do anything about their demand for a separate district the locals decided to put up their own candidate for the 10th Lok Sabha elections. Nothing unusual about that. Except for the fact that their candidate happened to be a donkey.

A suitably bedecked donkey-with colourful placards on his back-was then paraded through the bylanes of the town. sald one of the organisers of this campaign: "Our elected representatives are to

toriously indifferent. They are inactive MLAs most of the time. And if they can get elected without doing anything for the people, why not send a donkey instead?"

And why not? "Will you electme as the Koppal nominee?" screamed a placard. But electoral laws make no provisions for animals, however faithful and hardworking, to contest elections. And so the "people's representative" was denied the opportunity to file his papers.



#### **CREATIVE CAPS**

□ POLL graffiti on walls and lamp-posts have become passe. The rage now is the Gandhi cap. At a press meet of Socialist Congress leader S.W. Dhabe, supporters had slogans on their caps. The message: "Dal badlu hatao"(Remove defectors) "Loksahi bachao" (Save democracy).

#### **DOGGONE IT**

☐ MAVERICKS are fun. Madanial Dhartipakad of Gwalior has prefixed kutta (dog) to his name to distinguish himself from a namesake. His wife fears her children will be called kutte ke bacche (puppies). Argues he: "A dog is the most loyal animal. One should be happy to be described as a dog."



#### **CONFUSION REIGNS**

 □ VOTERS of Sathur constituency in Tamil Nadu are an extremely puzzled lot. Not only do they have far too many candidates to choose from but also most of their names appear to be the same. They have to pick from among seven Ramachandrans, two Balasubramanians, and two

Pughazendis. And the only way to distinguish one from the other is to go by the initials which are by no means simple. However, even that can prove to be



quite a mouthful: among the Ramachandrans there is a K.S.S.R. a K.S.A., an E.S.A. and an S.R.S.

Further confounding the confusion is the fact that the two Subramanians have the same initial: G. As for the Pughazendis, one is a C and the other a G. The Ramachandrans, the Subramanians, the Pughazendis along with their

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initials are enough to muddle even the most fanatic party worker who might be wondering why so much is being made of merely a name.



- Hare Ram, hare hare; Kamal chhaap ghare ghare. (Hail Ram, hail hail; and let lotuses bloom in every home.)
- Ashwamedh ka ghoda hai; Rajiv Gandhi ne chhora hai. (Mahendra Prasad, Congress(I) candidate, is the victorious Ashwamedh horse, let loose by Rajiv.) Congress(I) slogan in Jehanabad, Bihar
- Mera naam dharam nirpekshta ka sabse bada saboot hai; Mulayam Urdu ka shabd hai aur Singh Hindi ka. (My name is the biggest evidence of my secular credentials; Mulayam is an Urdu word and

■ Mulayam Singh Yadav's campaign speech





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#### **COOLING OFF**

ELECTIONEERING is usually pretty back-breaking business. But one would have logically assumed that it would be mere child's play for the wellknown body builder, Manchar Aich, However, the heat and dust of the campaign trail is proving too much for even the iron man.

After hours of campaigning in the heat of West Bengal's Dum Dum area, he felt he just could not take it any more. So, he decided to make a splash from the election scene-quite literally. While the temperature

soared him soared and the voters waited to listento him, the muscle man suddenly broke off from his large enfourage and dived straight into

a roadside pond,

The onlookers watched disbelief. in while Aich, who hasn't really generated much political heat, cooled off from the dusty trail. And, there he remained

neck-deep in water, while the onlookers gathered around, perhaps wondering whether this Aichact would create any political ripples in the Left-dominated electoral scenario. His political opponents are convinced that his popularity-graph too will take a dive.

#### **SULKING SOLANKI**

☐ THE slogan Parsivo kaan to vanda hoye ane kaan to gaanda hoye, Rajiv vando nathi mate gaando che (Parsis are either heirless or mad. Since Rajly is not heirless, he is mad) was coined by the follow-Madhavsinh of Solanki, after he opposed Congress(I)-Janata Dal(G) alliance.





#### **MAJOR PROBLEM**

□ WHAT happens when an army major crosses paths with a colonel? The major, of course, steps aside. Ramesh Chandra Patro, a former colonel contesting from Dhenkanal in Orissa on the BJP ticket, is counting on just that. Pitted against him is the Congress(I)'s K.P. Singh Deo, a former major.

#### DIVINE DIRECTION

☐ IT can only be called a divine dialogue. Well, it was more like a monologue actually. Orissa strongman Biju

Patnaik wanted to launch his election campaign on an auspicious note. And that is perhaps the reason why he decided to appeal directly to Lord Jagannath at the picturesque temple town of Puri.

At an election meeting last month, a throng of voters braved the scorching heat and waited endless hours to listen to the powerful oratory of the Janata Dal leader. When the chief minister finally put in an appearance, however, he preferred to make his address to the Lord himself. While the restive crowds stood by, Patnalk

stormed at the deity: "Kalia, tell me why people should live in poverty? Why should the world be full of miseries? Why should I remain the chief minister if I cannot do anything? Why should I not turn a rebel for the cause of the people?"

Good questions, Patnaik. Only the Lord had no answers to them.





- Nahin chahiye sona-chandi, hamen chahiye Rajiv Gandhi. (We don't want gold or silver; we only want Rajiv Gandhi. Congress(I) slogan in Rajasthan
- Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Isai, sab ki party Congress(I). (Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian; Congress(I) is everyone's party.) ■ Congress (I) slogan
- Three of us contesting the elections might be construed as furthering the family interests, which in my view is not in the interest of the country.
  - DEVI LAL, explaining his decision of restraining his sons from contesting elections



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KEY CONTESTS

# **PULLING OUT** THE STOPS

The prevailing electoral uncertainty and the general mood of the voting public seems to indicate that none of the major parties in the fray are in sight of a clear majority. Consequently, individual contests have acquired a greater importance than ever before. INDIA TODAY assesses some of the key contituencies where the popular and the powerful are locked in combat.

### BADAUN

### **Caste Calculations**

THIS is a prestige fight all the way and a real testing ground I for vote bank and minority political equations. There are three star candidates, symbolising a Muslim vs obc vs Hindu militant contest. The BJP candidate is the youthful-looking Swami Chinmayananda, a devastating campaigner. The BIP hopes to use him as a lynchpin to consolidate the Hindu wave from Bareilly-Aonla-Badaun-Sahaswan-Etah, the crucial Rohilkhand belt where Muslims have been a deciding factor. Badaun has nearly 2 lakh Muslim voters of a total of 9 lakh voters. Shervani is the youthful Muslim face of Congress(I)he won this seat in 1984—whose job it is to wean the Muslims away from the Janata Dal, and attract Harijan and obc votes. Sharad Yaday, the Janata Dal candidate—elected from here in

1989—is among the party's most powerful obc leaders, with ambitions of becoming chief minister.

The signals from this contest are significant. If Shervani gets the en bloc Muslim vote plus most of the Harijan vote and splits the obcs, Congress(I) will reassert its traditional vote bank. If the BJP takes all Hindu votes (by projecting this as a communal battle), Hindutva will have to be recognised as a new force. And if Yadav wins, V.P. Singh's new anti-Congress(I) vote bank will have been established. But at the moment Yadav appears to be on a weak wicket, having entered the campaign late and having done little for his constituency in the last year-and-a-half. The advantage on poll-eve seemed to rest with Chinmayananda.

The electioneering in the constituency is hectic and no holds-barred. Congress(I) workers are spreading the work that "Sharad Yadav is not only an outsider from Jabalpur but also that he's not a Yadav but a dhobi". Yadav's supporters counter that Shervani is communal and helped only Muslim victims after the 1989 rioting. Chinmayananda, of course plays it clearly communal, dubbing them both anti-Ram.

Swami Chinmayananda (left); and Shervani doing a blitzkrieg of villages: close fight





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# A Saffron Cakewalk

ATAL Behari Vajpayee might as well order letter-heads bearing the seal of member of Parliament from Lucknow. He's been handed the seat on a platter by the opposition parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties' decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties decision to field weak candidates and parties decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties decision to field weak candidates are parties decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties decision to field weak candidates are parties decision to field weak candidates. The Janata Dal's parties decision to field weak candida

One factor in Vajpayee's favour is that he is perceived as being the least threatening to Muslims of all BJP leaders. Explains Jamil Ahmed, who runs a garage in Udaiganj: "Some of us might even vote for him because the feeling is that if we place our trust in him, he will not work against us."

The other two candidates in the running are the congress(I)'s Ranjit Singh and the spr's Heeru Saxena, both momentities in terms of local politics. When Chandra Shekhar came to Lucknow on May 2 to campaign for Mrs Saxena, the policemen outnumbered the audience.

Asfor the Congress(I), it sparked off a controversy when it decided to replace its first choice—Om Pathak, former district magistrate of Lucknow—in a very unceremonious fashion. Pathak came to file his papers only to discover he had been passed over in favour of an unknown, Ranjit Singh, prompt-



Vajpayee filing papers in Lucknow: free field

ing a local official to remark: "They have all given Vajpayee such a free field that he needn't bother campaigning in Lucknow at all. He can concentrate on the rest of the state." That is exactly what Vajpayee has been doing. Indeed, he may not return to Lucknow until it's time for the celebration.

### WESTBENGAL

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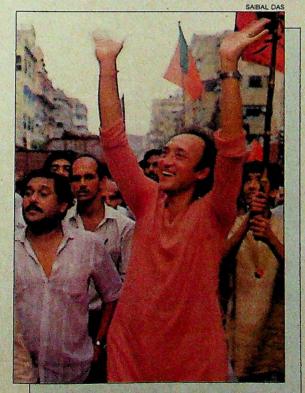
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### Passage to Parliament

THIS otherwise staid con-1 stituency has suddenly been catapulted to national imelight. Reason: the BJP's felding of the internationaly acclaimed film star Victor Banerjee. And the party is pulling out all the stops to ensure lictor's passage to Parliament. a perhaps the only West Benal seat where the BJP has a shing chance, the party is out on the streets with its staple ogan of Ram, Roti and Insaaf. Calcutta North-West has along been a supposedly Congress(I) bastion. Debi Pal. Congress(I) contender. hon in the last election with a andsome margin, making nincemeat of the Left Front-Asoke Sen. Moreover, of the seven assembly segochis that fall within the conthicney, four had gone to the longress(I) and the rest to the parties in the 1987 assembolls. Though the left parare standing behind the adala Dal's Dilip Chakraborty,



Banerjee on the campaign trail: tough task

few give him an outside chance of winning. Going by this track-record, the Congress(I) certainly has an edge over the other parties.

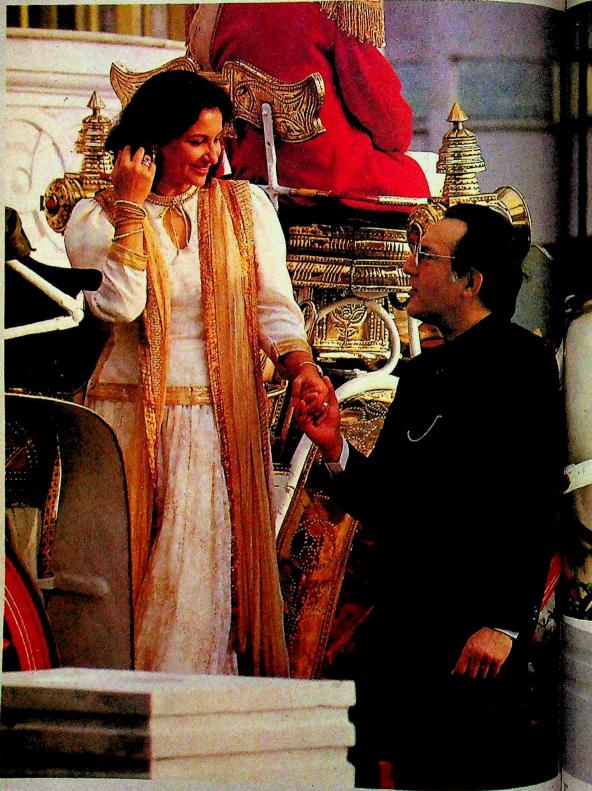
However, Victor is blunting that edge as well as threatening to turn political calculations topsy-turvy by his whirlwind campaigning. This has prompted Pal to reassess his strategy.

Not that victory is anywhere within sight for the actorturned-politiciah.

The BJP hopes to garner votes of the sizeable up-country trader community. It is also keen to attract the true-blue Bengali votes by playing upon regional sentiments. That is why, the matinee idol is going around campaigning dressed in typical Bengali-babu fashion, in a white muslin dhotikurta. And what does he stress? "The BJP is truly a Bengali party. It owes its existence to our own son of the soil, Shyamaprasad Mukherjee."

But the razzle-dazzle notwithstanding, cutting into committed Congress(I) and leftist votes may not prove all that easy for him. West Bengal is identified with a highly polarised polity. The crowds still love film stars but the state has no precedent of electing actors. For all you know, the euphoria Victor's nomination had generated may just be a case of much ado over nothing. Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri

## TO A FRIEND'S WEDDINGTH

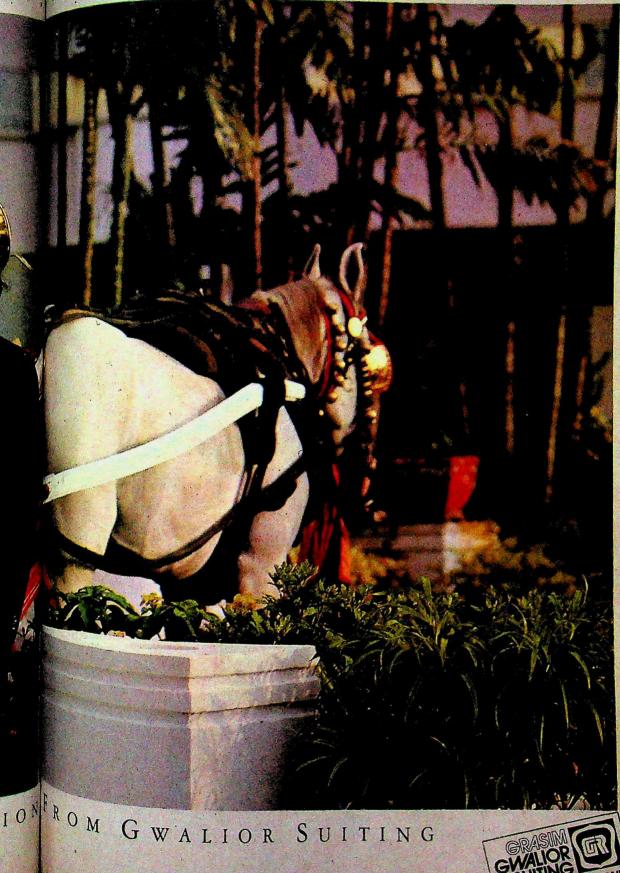


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### THE ROAD IS NEVER LONG



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### MADHYAPRADESH

BHOPAL

### **Tiger by the Tail**

WITH three heavyweights in the fray, Bhopal has overnight become the most glamorous contest in Madhya Pradesh. The Congress(I) has fielded Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi, former cricket captain and scion of the Bhopal royal family, the BJP has renominated the sitting MP S.C. Verma and the Janata Dal has opted for Swami Agnivesh, the saffronrobed social activist.

The candidature of 'Tiger' Pataudi, 50, handpicked by

Rajiv Gandhi, to win the 17-per cent Muslim votes, has enlivened the scene. Having contested, and lost, an election once in Haryana—"That was 20 years ago and more to protest the abolition of privy purses,"—he remains new to politics. Pataudi, who formally joined the Congress(I) over a week after filling his papers, says he entered politics because, "I don't want to remain an arm-chair critic".

Pataudi has gathered a few lessons in campaigning such as picking up and hugging street-urchins and making promises like: "If I am elected, the slum dwellers will get land leases for 99 years." But for the party workers he is a let-down. He seems to have left behind the poise and charisma that he displayed while modelling, and the party workers are complaining about his rude outbursts. In sharp contrast, the affable Verma is conducting a low-key campaign, dependent on a large army of dedicated workers, his work in the area, and over one lakh votes of the Kayastha community. Swami Agnivesh's candidature has lent colour to the contest but he is handicapped by the poor organisation of the party. The real match remains between Pataudi and Verma.



(Clockwise from top) Pataudi; Verma; Agnivesh: mega battle



RAIPUR

### **Cashing in on Inconsistency**

Politically, the most interesting contest in Madhya Pradesh is Raipur, from where the Congress(I) has fielded V.C. Shukla, the former external affairs minister. Shukla is the

classic party-hopper who has moved from the Congress(I) to the Jan Morcha, from the Janata Dal to the Samajwadi Janata Party only to return 'home' on poll eve. That he was able to wrest a ticket, despite opposition from detractors like Arjun Singh, is in itself a victory of sorts.

Vidya Bhaiya, as he is known, was helped by his elder brother and former chief minister, S.C. Shukla, who had a major say in the distribution of tickets in Madhya Pradesh as the leader of the Opposition. The Shukla brothers have a formidable

base among Congressmen in the Chhattisgarh regionthanks to their illustrious father, Ravi Shanker Shukla, the state's first chief minister. The presence of the brothers on the same side of the fence after 13 years has added a new dimension to group rivalry within the Congress(I) in the state.

Though Shukla managed to get a ticket from Raipur abandoning the Mahasamund constituency from where last

time as a Janata Dal nominee he scraped throughby 12,000 votes, he still faces an uphill task. While he has won four elections from Mahasamund, he has contested twice from Raipur and lost once, His rival, sitting BJP MP Ramesh Bais, is confident of victory, having won the last election by a margine 84,000 votes. The BJP b trying to make the most out of his record of politi cal inconsistency. But I seems like the going will not be so smooth for him come election hour.



V.C. Shukla: party-hopping pays

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Bis literally a barefoot campaigner. Nevertheless, he is Considered the BJP's answer to the Delhi Congress(I) googman H.K.L. Bhagat. With one foot swathed in bandages, Baikunth Lal Sharma walks into a dingy bylane in my Nand Nagri. As women complain about sagging ectric wires from the posts, he promises to amend matters gon after the elections are over. Asked about his injury, he golcally says: "I walked into a yagna fire."

Ringed by boisterous Bajrang Dal supporters-many of whom are still learning civics and political science in school-Sharma boasts: "Bhagat has always won because his conunders were weak. Now he has met more than his match."

Going by the response he evokes everywhere it does not sound like an empty brag. For instance, it's the first time that Bhagat's rival has surpassed him in plattering the walls with election graffiti and postm. Bhagat, however, is a veteran. In the absence of myoverriding issue, the man with the dark glasses is trying to lend some colour to his campaign and to strike a new intimacy with his voters. He does an wasional jig (remember his recent pirouette with ppsinger Parvati Khan) and rides majestically in a borse-driven carriage. He is also attending sundry social functions. In fact that keeps him so occupied hat Bhagat himself admits: "These days I am agging behind my schedule."

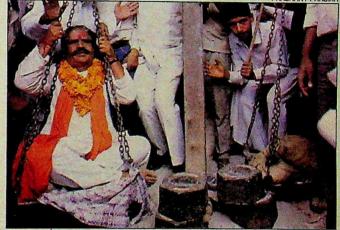
But unless he watches out, Bhagat will lag behind once the counting of votes begins. The BSP's Kanshi Ram has also entered the fray. Yet the main lattle will be between Sharma and Bhagat, both bugh guys, even if one of them dances.



BHAWAN SINGH

### Bhagat (top), and B.L. Sharma: a heavyweight bout

RASHANT PANJIAR



### IONBAY NORTH-WEST A Script for Success

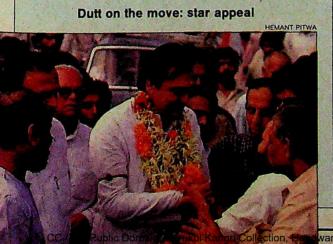
UNIL Dutt's latest film is Yeh Aag Kabh Bujhegi. If the flame On question was a reference to the actor-politician's lopularity, then the quick

isponse will be, not this time ether. In Bombay, Dutt was be only member of the Lok Sabha who was onsidered a certainty for relection. In fact he has Non twice already—the at time against the relablable lawyer Ram ahmalani—in a constitocy which includes th film celebrity neighsboods What has always bae in Dutt's favour is fact that he has eschewed the histrionics of actor-politicians such as N.T. Rama Rao, and, more importantly, he has never been dragged into scandals the way Amitabh Bachchan has been.

As Dutt went about campaigning last fortnight, addressing small groups outside railway stations, on the importance of unity and progress, the message was clear—the simple virtues of diligence and sincerity which the actor has displayed in his public career are valued by voters who are sick of the dishonesty and duplicity of politicians. His opponents this time

include Shiv Sena MLA Ramesh Prabhoo, who has been unseated from the state Assembly in the past for conducting a communal campaign, and surprise Janata Dal candidate Anees Syed, wife of Ayub Syed, editor of the weekly Current and a V.P. Singh confidant.

If Dutt loses, it can only mean that the Congress(I)'s traditional supporters—the poor and the minorities—have serted the party en masse.



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# Devi in Decline

THE Tau hurricane which swept the interiors of Haryana in '89 has been reduced to a diminutive dust whirl. Devi Lal's Rohtak campaign tells it all. Rallies are quite rare and attendance is poor and disappointing. Travelling in a swank Mercedes 240D, he spouts meeting after tireless meeting his petheme to the disinterested villagers—farmers deprived of

the fruits of development after more than 40 years of planning. But the theme of the raw deal to the farmers has very few buyers. As Devi Lal's electoral stature visibly diminishes, the competition has perked up, and the rival candidates have turned quite hopeful of meting out an unthinkable defeat to the towering Tau. Congress(I)'s Bhupinder Singh Hooda harps on the fact of Tau resign-

ing from Rohtak to retain the Sikar seat. Referring also to the incidents of violence that marred the byelection at Meham, Hooda says: "Devi



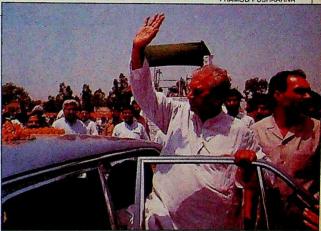
Hooda (left); and Devi Lal: taming the Tau?

Lal promised money-minting machines but sent machineguns instead."

The Haryana Vikas Party-Janata Dal combine has also put up a Jat candidate, Inder Singh Dhull. Both camps are trying to wean away Jat votes from Devi Lal. Jats constitute about 39 per cent of the total vote. The backwards and OBCs account for 40 per cent and the rest are Brahmins, Mahajans and Khatris

The Devi Lal camp is hopeful of the urban vote being split between his rivals. In '89 Tau had fared badly in urban segments, but the favourable rural slide enabled him to romp home. But this time, sections of the rural voters are alienated. During his visit to Rohtak, when he expressed his inability to change the spr candidate for the Kaloi Vidhan Sabha seat, the villagers told him: "If you can't do it, we will ensure his defeat." The unflinching faith in Tau is clearly a thing of the past.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



### MAYILADUTHURAI Mani Means Business

 $\prod_{\substack{\text{doesn't} \ \text{cut much electoral ice in Mayiladuthurai. So}}} Il Simage as Rajiv Gandhi's buddy and influential aide$ Mani Shankar Aiyar has discreetly shed his cosmopolitan air and opted for a son of the soil image, complete with a

white cotton dhoti and khadi shirt. The opposition DMK's strategy is to paint him as an outsider who can't even speak Tamil. But Aiyar does speak Tamil—after a fashion—and quips: "The DMK are turning out to be my best campaigners." The triangular contest a traditional Congress(I) stronghold has reduced his beer belly by Several pounds. Opposing Alyar are the DMK's P. kalyanam and A.K.A. Abdus Samad, who broke

king

away from the AIADMK-Congress(I) front to join forces with the Pattali Makkal Katchi (РМК) and is confident of winning Muslim and Vannivar votes. Maviladuthurai has about three lakh Vanniyars, over a lakh Muslims and about 80,000 Brahmins. Kalyanam, a Vanniyar, feels that voters will reject the "Brahmin" in Aiyar even if they sympathise with the Congress(I). But Aiyar's problem is the Moopanars: former AICC(1) General Secretary G.K. Moopanar and his brother Rangasamy Moopanar who control the Congress(I) cadres in Thanjavur are opposed to Aiyar because of their antipathy towards Aiyar's friend, TNCC(1)

> chief Vazhapadi, Without the Moopanars' support. Aiyar's campaign machinery is totally out of gear, with a total absence of co-ordination and depressingly poor atten-dance at his meetings. Aiyar's standard line is to tell voters what they need is someone close to the centre of power in Delhi who can act decisively on their problems. But judging by Aiyar's own electoral problems, he has an uphill trudge ahead.



MAY 31, 1991 . INDIA TODAY 73

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### A High-Profile Contest

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m ATNA}$  is the electoral gateway to all of Bihar. Which is why a galaxy of high-profile candidates are scrabbling for the seat. Among the 51 contenders: former external affairs minister I.K. Gujral for the Janata Dal; C.P. Thakur, a Padmashree physician for the Congress(I): bureaucratturned-politician Yashwant Sinha from the Samajwadi Janata Party: the Indian People's Front's Yogeshwar Gope, a trade union leader and the BJP's teacher-writer Shailendra Nath Srivastva.

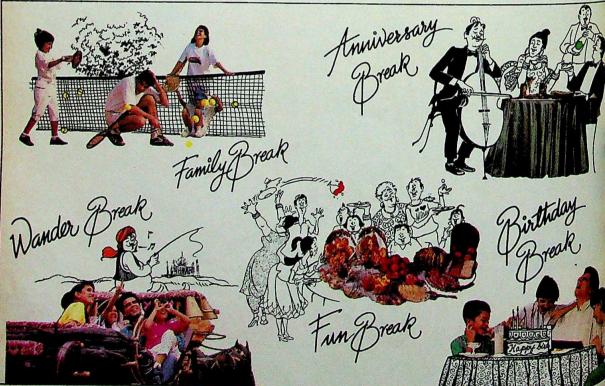
While Gujral has always stood out for his secular outlook. Thakur is a household name in the state having once been Jayaprakash Narayan's personal physician. Sinha is also on strong ground as he was once principal secretary to former state chief minister Karpoori Thakur. Gope has been a militant trade union leader who fought for the non-

But what matters in Bihar today is caste. Gujral, being an outsider, should be at the losing end. However, he does have the advantage of being Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav's personal choice. In fact, Yadav even classified Gujral as a Gujjar—according to Yadav a Gujjar in Punjab is the Bihari equivalent of an Ahir. Gujral was quick to state that: "I have not come to Bihar to fight elections on caste lines." But with Yadav's weight behind him, Gujral may well squeeze through.



Gujral (top); and Sinha: caste counts





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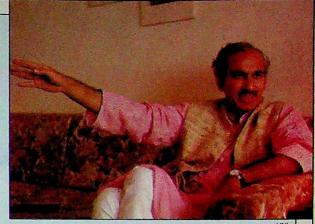
with friends

### (ISHANGANJ Secularism vs Fundamentalism

THIS is the much-awaited contest of 1989 that never took place. In the last election Insaaf Party leader Syed the bababuddin was meant to lock horns with Congress(I) oblician M.J. Akbar in Muslim-dominated Kishanganj in a battle for supremacy in the Muslim leadership race. But a last unute hitch saw Shahabuddin contesting from Bangalore. This time the battle royale is on. The only difference is that Shahabuddin is now fighting on a Janata Dal ticket. Initially he fled his nomination as a Samajwadi Janata Party candithe from the communally-sensitive Moradabad constituacy. The Janata Dal fielded heavyweight Taslimuddin from Kishanganj. But at the last minute, Shahabuddin flew into Kishanganj and filed his papers as a Janata Dal candidate.

ts

Badrul Doza, the SJP general secretary feels the sudden witch is an attempt on Laloo Prasad Yadav's part to sdeline Taslimuddin. Says he: "While the chief minister daims to be pro-minorities, he has set up only those Muslim candidates who are sure to lose." Shahabuddin remains unperturbed. His explanation for thechange: he considers both the Janata Dal and the SIP as his own since both are for protecting the minorities. Meanwhile, the Akbar camp is delighted with the choice of a"fundamentalist" leader over Taslimuddin who stood a brotter chance of winning. Not that Taslimuddin is out of the contest: he has now jumped into the fray as an independent candidate. But the real battle is still between Akbar and Shahabuddin. Or, as the Akbar camp portrays i, between secularism and fundamentalism.



Akbar (top); Shahabuddin: opposing appeal



PRASHANT PANIAR

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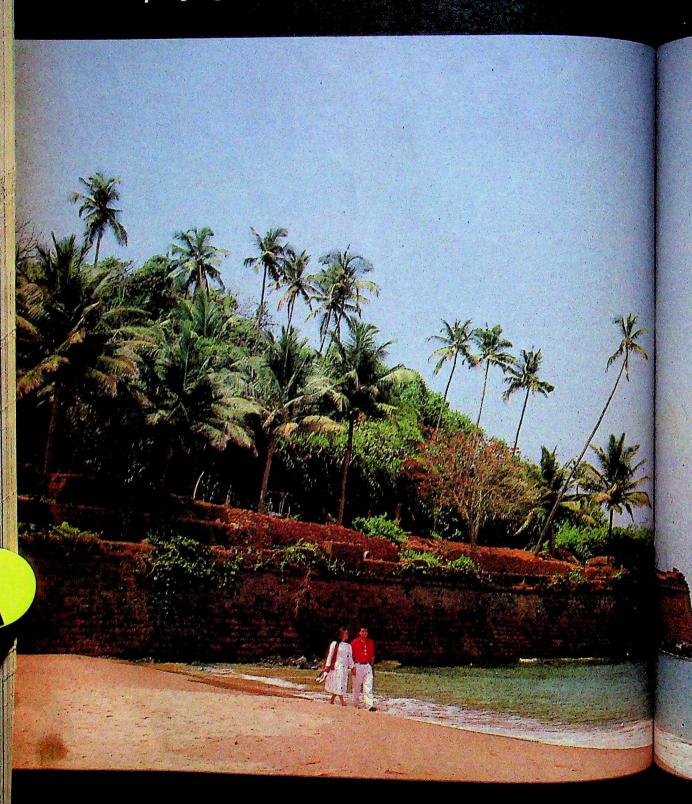
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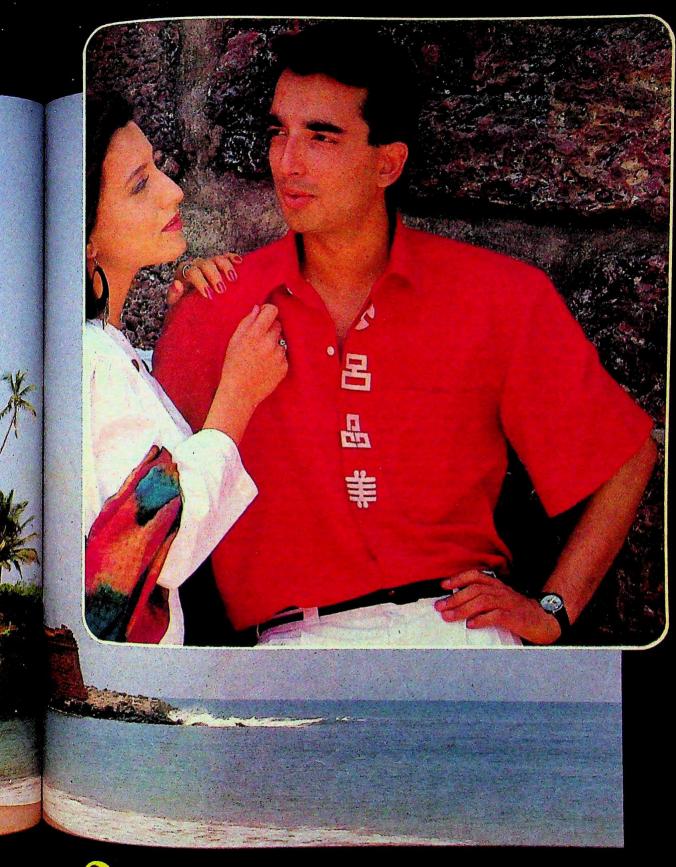
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BETTING

# **FLUCTUATING** FORTUNES

A multi-crore illegal satta market is flourishing across the country as a vasi. anonymous army of punters place bets on the outcome of the elections

The India Today bureau

NYBODY listening in to the telephone conversation taking place in Bhiwani's Aaloo Bazaar would be nonplussed. One caller wants to buy a gaddi (car) for the Congress(I). Another wants a peti (box) and a third is willing to splurge on a kothi (house). However, at least 5,000 people in the dusty Haryana town will know the conversation is in reality an encoded one, and the callers are part of the vast, anonymous army of punters placing their bets on the outcome of this election. A gaddi means the punter is placing a bet of Rs 10,000; a peti is a bet of Rs 1 lakh and a khokha (wooden room)-not so rare even in Bhiwani-is a bet of Rs 1 crore.

Bhiwani is, in any case, just one of the many centres for satta—the intricate, countrywide network of illegal bookies who accept bets on anything from the onset of the monsoon to the outcome of elections. Satta transactions in Bhiwani alone range from Rs 25 lakh to Rs 50 lakh in a single day, increasing as polling day approaches. As many as 10,000 punters from neighbouring areas are drawn into the betting process.

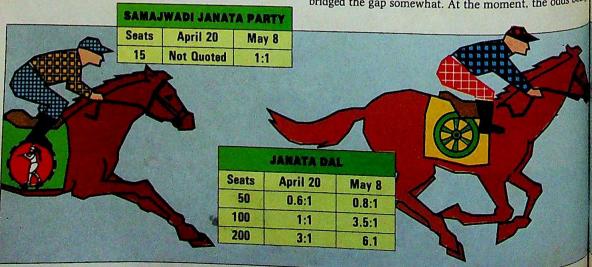
But the nerve-centre of the entire operation is Bombay. which dictates the kind of odds being offered on various parties, and even on individuals. In fact, so elaborate and finetuned is the satta market that the fluctuations in the odds are

often more revealing about the prevailing electoral winds than psephologists' analyses and opinion polls. Between end April and the first week of May, the Congress(I) was clearly the favourite in Bombay's multi-crore illegal betting market, with odds on its winning a majority varying from an upbeat 2 to 1 to a more realistic 4 to 1. (A bet of 2:1 means that if the Congress) wins a majority, for every rupee bet the return is Rs 2, plusthe bet placed, in this case Re 1. The higher return on odds of 4 to 1 indicates the bookies are confident it will not gain a majority.

'It's like an all-favourite horse race. The bookies never lose," a gambler says. Since it is a totally hush-hush business the odds can vary drastically, though the overall trend will not be dissimilar. The real frenzy will pick up only in the third week of May, but the initial trend favours the Congress(I). A leading Dalal Street operator was offering these odds last fortnight Congress(I) getting a majority—4 to 1 (Rs4 for every rupee);地 winning 201 seats—3 to 2 (Rs 1.50 for every rupee), BF obtaining a majority-8 to 1 (Rs 8 for every rupee); the party getting 101 seats-1.8 to 1 (Rs 1.80 for each rupee). Janata Dal winning 101 seats-3.5 to 1 (Rs 3.50 for every ruper) Samajwadi Janata Party (SJP), an outsider in the electoral derby, was trailing the field at 15 to 1 (Rs 15 for every rupee)

Though Bombay is where the big money changes hands betting in Calcutta's Burrabazar, the city's wholesale trade centre (also controlled by Bombay-based bookies), has already touched around Rs 10 crore. The final figure is expected to reach Rs 20 crore. The odds being offered against each party have been fluctuating though the favourite, the Congress has slipped a few rungs, and the BJP and Janata Dal hard bridged the gap somewhat. At the moment, the odds being

ALL INDIA ODDS FOR THE **FOUR NATIONAL PARTIES:** 



offered for the Congress(I) are the same as in Bombay: 4:1. The prating is at 10:1 and that of the Janata Dal 15:1.

Prating is at 10:1 and that of the Janata Dal 15:1.

A week earlier, the Congress(I) enjoyed odds of 2.5:1 A week earlier, the Congress(I) enjoyed odds of 2.5:1 (which means there was a greater chance perceived of a congress(I) majority, and for every rupee bet the return would the ks2.5). The BJP was way behind at 20:1. The Janata Dal was also at 20:1. Bookies have written off the sJP. Betting on it is confined to whether the party can win over 10 seats in the country. For five seats, the money being offered is 1:1. For 10 gals, the odds being offered are 2:1.

Inbetting on likely prime ministers, Rajiv Gandhi's ahead, rating 4:1. Advani's rating is 10:1, V.P. Singh's 15:1 and Chandra Shekhar's 1,000:1. Among individual candidates, yctor Banerjee claims he would bet on himself winning. But

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HE odds in Delhi's satta circle predict at least 200 seats for the Congress(I). Similarly, the odds for the BJP cornering about 100 seats and the Janata Dal 50 seats are favourable. Significantly, the SJP is not even being considered in this closed cabal controlled by a handful of operators. The rates and the booking are confined to a select circle, mostly in the Chandni Mahal and

walled city area, where word of mouth is binding. Only trusted people with creditworthiness are allowed. The bet on the Congress(I) gaining 200 seats is now around 80 paise. (A bet of Inpecon the Congress(I) getting 200 or more seats earns the punter Rs 1.80. But if it gets less than 200, he loses his rupee.) The rate for the Congress(I) getting 225 seats is now Rs 1.90, and on 250 seats the returns rise to Rs 4.

Prevailing rates for a BJP tally of 100 seats are a comfortable 30 paise. But when the surreptitious market opened, the odds were 80 paise for the saffron party. Similarly, the odds for the Janata Dal were around 80 paise. Interestingly, when betting began, the Congress(I)'s rate was 45 paise, while the rate for the Janata Dal winning 50 seats was 60 paise.

The size of the bets vary, depending on the players. In many instances there are no limits. Bookies also set minimal limits which may vary from Rs 5,000 to Rs 20,000 for each bet. And while no figure is readily available, an estimated Rs 5

lakh are staked every day. The Delhi satta market is only onefourth the Bombay one, and is just an extension of it. The rates and the odds are not locally created but derived from Bombay.

As in other places, the Delhi bazaar too is offering bets on the probable prime minister. The present rate for Rajiv Gandhi becoming prime minister is 80 paise for every rupee bet, while that of V.P. Singh is Rs 10. L.K. Advani's chances of becoming the prime minister are regarded to be better and are Rs 5 for every rupee bet. The latest odds of Rajiv Gandhi becoming the prime minister is 75 paise, while those for L.K. Advani have fluctuated between Rs 2.50 to Rs 3.

When betting began in Delhi, H.K.L. Bhagat was considered a sure winner with a low rate of 15 paise if he wins. Today the rate has risen to 30 paise. L.K. Advani's chances of

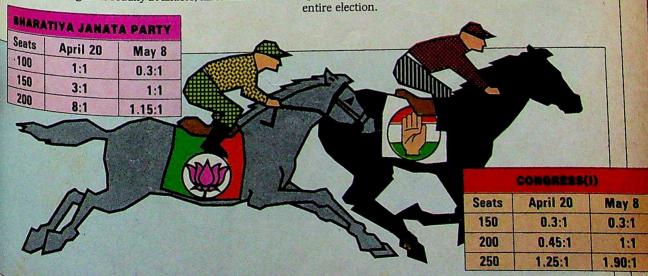
winning are better and his individual rate has gone down from the initial 35 paise to 25 paise. The odds on Congress(I)'s Rajesh Khanna winning are Rs 2.50 for every rupee.

In Indore, satta is also played on which candidates will get crucial tickets. In Rajkot and Jaipur, bets are placed on the movement of politically sensitive shares, like those of Reliance. If the Ahmedabad bookies are to be believed, the BJP's stock has gone high after April 20 but none of

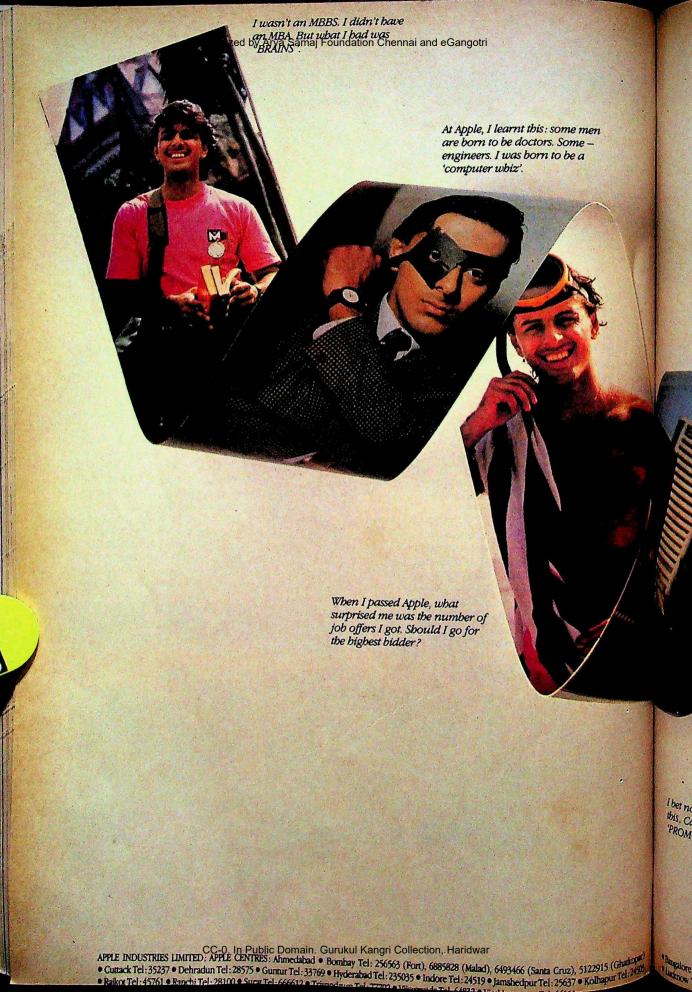
the parties, including the Congress(I), would get 200 seats. The Janata Dal won't win even 100 seats. (The city's established bookies do not accept bets of less than Rs 1,000.) Interestingly, the Janata Dal doesn't figure anywhere in the Manekchowk jewellers market which houses the stock exchange and from where the city's bookies operate. "Nobody wants to bet on it (the Janata Dal)," says an Ahmedabad bookie.

But overall, the odds favouring the Congress(I) getting 240 seats in mid-April, were down by the end of the first week of May to around 190 seats in the satta market. The BJP, on the other hand, has gained with the odds favouring it getting 120 seats as opposed to 90 seats in end-April. Thus, the prevailing trend in satta circles seems to indicate a hung Parliament. The only certainty is that the electoral stakes have never been higher. At a conservative estimate, by the time May 20 rolls around, approximately Rs 200 crore would have been spent by punters all over the country—enough to finance the entire election.

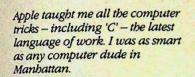
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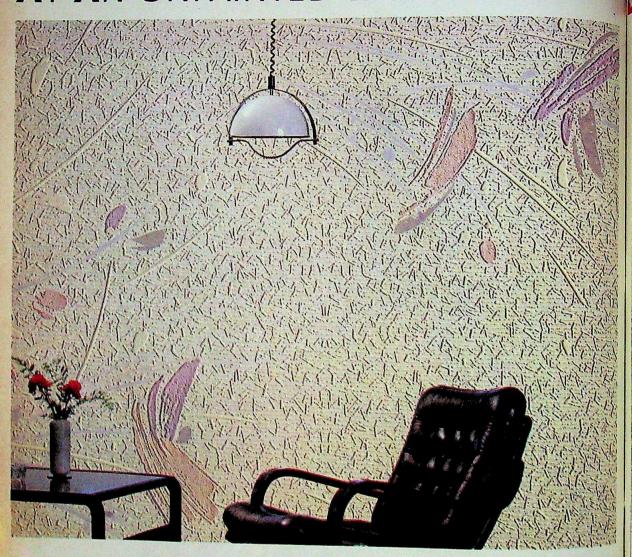
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# OMINOUS SIGNALS

The spectre of violence hangs over the elections with mafia gangs likely to indulge in large-scale rigging and intimidation of voters

HE sudden spurt of pre-poll violence in Bihar which claimed over 10 lives in 22 incidents of violence and saw the open brandishing of arms by private armies, has confirmed the worst fears. As a nation-wide contro-

versy broke over a possible postponement of elections in the state, it overshadowed the ominous spectre of large-scale violence which looms over other states as well.

In fact, the threat of the bullet over the ballot exists in as many as 448 of the 537 constituencies. Expected to be one of the most violent elections—coming on the heels of the Ayodhya and Mandal clashes—the Centre and the Election Commission have been working overtime to meet demands for additional deployment of forces.

Already, 15 million police personnel have been sent to six lakh polling stations. In the 1984 polls, 48 persons were killed while in 1989, 197 died in shootouts, bomb blasts and stabbing incidents. Anticipating a two-fold increase in violence, the number of election observers has been raised from the previous 75 to 300. "Warning lights are beginning to flash," says Chief Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan. The Home Ministry has despatched 650 companies of paramilitary troops, aside from the 970 companies already deployed. It has classified violence into three categories: communal, inter-caste and inter-party clashes. And a special 'strike lorce' has been put on poll duty after an orientation course on electoral laws.

One of the worst hit areas Uttar Pradesh. Voters are

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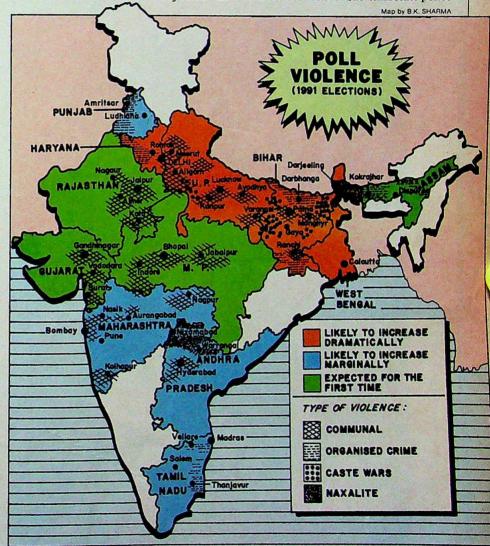
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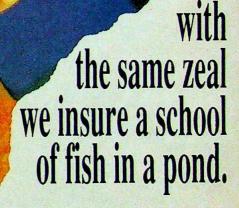
polarised on communal lines—the BJP cashing in on the temple issue and the Janata Dal playing the minority card. As many as 127 paramilitary companies—the maximum in any state—have been sent to assist the 23-lakh state police



Of the 335 constituencies identified as violence-prone, 45 are critical and 175 serious.

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force. In the last general election, Uttar Pradesh saw 26 murders and 38 cases of rioting which led to a repoll in 695 polling stations. This time, 5,000 polling stations have been declared "extremely sensitive"

ITH the absence of a clear wave for one party, most constituencies will witness quadrangular contests, adding to the threat of violence. Mafia gangs are likely to indulge in large-scale rigging and intimidation of voters. In fact, four Lok Sabha and 33 assembly candidates fielded by Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav face charges

of murder and dacoity. Mulayam Singh has also posted trusted men as shos in Etawah, Mainpuri and Etah. Detractors allege this is to enable booth capturing. At the same time, the local administration has arrested 15 criminals under the National Security Act, who, officials reveal, have traditionally worked for the BJP, Congress(I) or Janata Dal. With assembly polls also being held in the state, hired criminals could prove doubly useful: analysts say up to 12 per cent rigging can ensure a candidate's victory in the assembly polls while in a Lok Sabha constituency, 40 per cent rigging is required for a win.

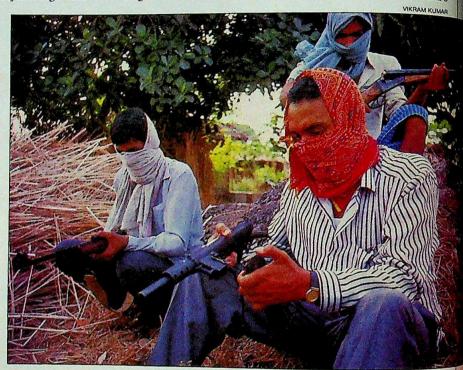
Bihar has already given a foretaste of what is in store. The arms bazaar is booming with countrymade weapons. Last fortnight, candidates vied to display their bristling arsenal, many filing their nominations with armed workers in tow. A blacksmith in Patna district, who supervises gun-

making in bhattis, says: "Each unit has got orders for 200 to 300 guns, pistols and shotguns." Officials fear these elections will mark the final round of caste conflicts, for the state Government's decision to implement the Mandal Commission report has split society vertically with the Bhumihars and Yadavs already making a bid for supremacy. backed by private armies. But Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav contends that the situation is not as critical as it seems and is merely a bogey raised by the Opposition to dismiss his government. Going by the state's past record however—while 80 booths were captured in 1969, the number rose to 1,231 in last year's assembly polls—the fears are not entirely unfounded.

Neighbouring West Bengal is not lagging far behind. With mafia gangs spoiling for a fight, officials expect the scene to get very ugly, especially as the BJP is making its presence felt and communal passions are distinctly on the rise. As a precaution, 11,000 of the 50,000 booths have

been declared sensitive. Equally sensitive is the situation in Andhra Pradesh which has witnessed a fresh spurt of Naxalite activity. Elections provide the right cover to settle factional disputes. The militant People's War Group has already called for a boycott and is expected to selectively attack vehicles used by different parties.

In Harvana, a tinder-box situation exists in the Jat-dominated districts of Hissar, Rohtak and Bhiwani which have a dubious history of booth-capturing. Particularly tense is Bhiwani, Bansi Lal's district, which saw intense clashes in 1987 and 1989. The worst is expected from Chautala's



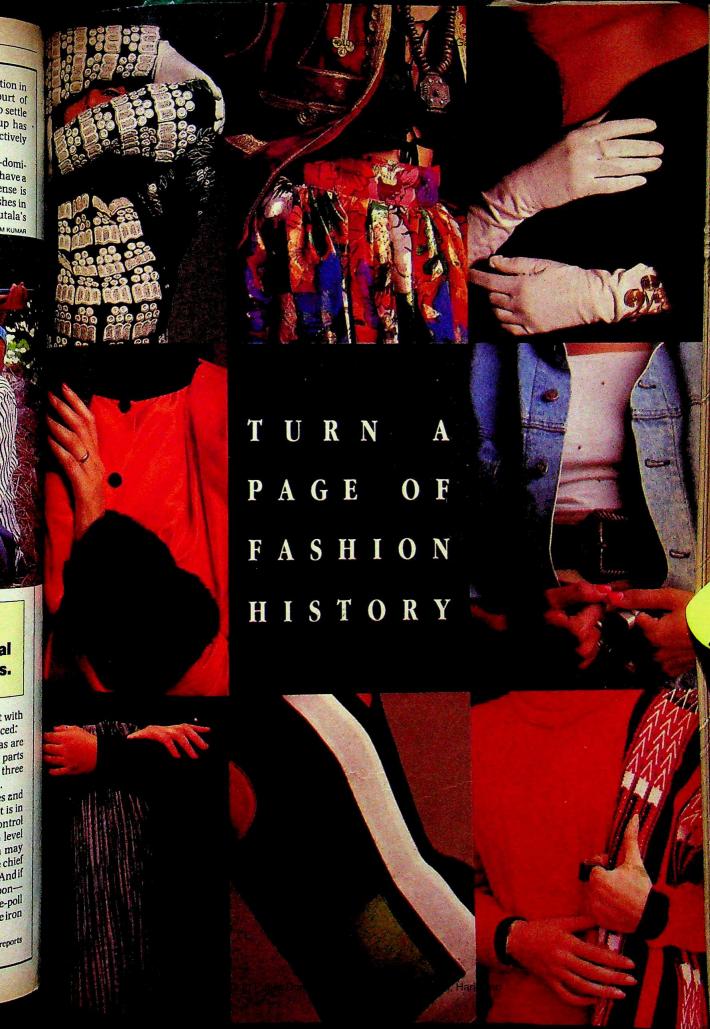
With the open brandishing of arms by private armies, it is going to be a race between the Central forces and criminal gangs hired by the candidates.

infamous Green Brigade. The only silver lining is that with President's Rule, fears of rampant violence are reduced:

Surprising additions to the list of "sensitive" areas are relatively peaceful states like Gujarat, Rajasthan and parts of Madhya Pradesh. Poll-eve communal violence in three major Gujarat towns has activated state authorities.

Clearly, it will be a race between the Central forces and criminal gangs hired by candidates. The Government is in constant touch with the states through a central control room. A Central Task Force, comprising DIG and IG level officers, will also liaise with the states. The situation may therefore not prove as grim as it now appears. But the chief election commissioner is not inclined to take chances. Andif all else fails, is not averse to using his last weapon-countermanding elections. Given the bristling pre-poll scenario, Seshan may well find himself forced to use the iron hand that he says is encased in his velvet glove.

-HARINDER BAWEJA with bureau reports

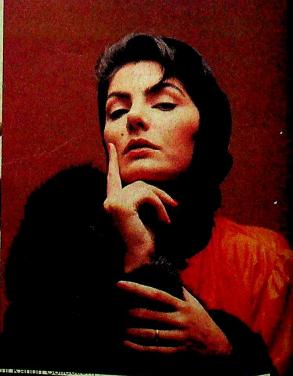








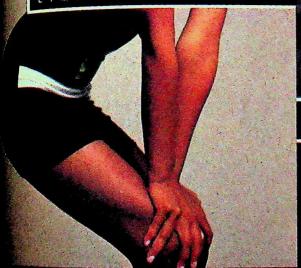
1940s SOFT WARM WOOL TAKES THE WORLD BY STORM



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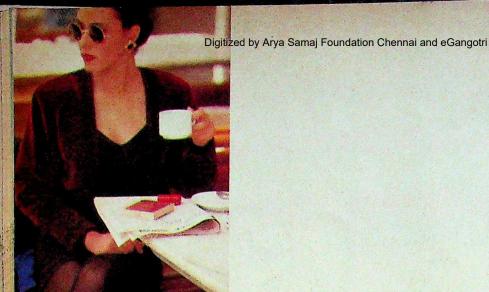
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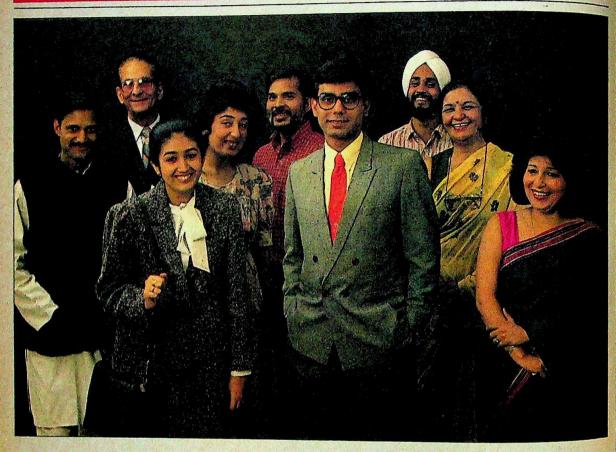
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would ment o Reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is a principle that India has lived with for the past 40 years. But the issue has never ripped apart Indian society with the passion and anger that have come in the wake of the Mandal report. As part of our continuing series, INDIA to Today invited Veena Das, S.S. Gill, S.K. Goyal, Chandan Mitra, Dileep Padgaonkar, S. Jaipal Reddy, D.S. Sheth, and S.K. Singh to debate the critical issue. The debate was chaired by Features Editor SHEKHAR GUPTA, edited by Kajal Basu, and assisted by Anjali Abhyankar.

## CASTE VS CLASS

nt.

§. Jaipal Reddy: Reservation is not peculiar to India, though caste is. In Malaysia you have reservation for the Malays, in America for the Negros. So one cannot object to the principle of reservation. In India, caste is the most pervasive phenomenon and it is also the most perverse. Therefore, all those who have tried to understand Indian society in terms of class, I think, have been wide off the mark. In Indian society class and caste overlap. Special schemes for the lower classes have been enforced in the south for a century. Consequently caste as an institution in the south is much weaker than in the north.

The social and educational environment has as much to do with merit as that abstract entity called IQ. I would like to read out from a judgement delivered by the Supreme Court in the Vasanta Kumar case. "What is merit?" asked the judge. "He has been brought up in an atmosphere of pen-

ury, illiteracy and without any culture, is looked down upon by society, has no books or magazines to read, no radio to listen to, no TV to watch, no one to help him with his homework, whose parents are illiterate, and that he cannot hope to seek their advice on any matter of importance. If he, with all his disadvantages, is able to secure the qualifying 40 per cent or 51 per cent marks at a competitive examination where the children of upper classes with all the full advantages, who go to St Paul's High School and St Stephen's College, who have perhaps been specially coached for the examination, may secure 70, 80 or even 90 per cent, surely a child who has been able to jump so many hurdles may be expected to do better as he progresses in his life." The judge goes on to say: "A spring flower he cannot be, an autumn flower he may be." Why then should he be stopped at the threshold of an alleged meritorian principle?

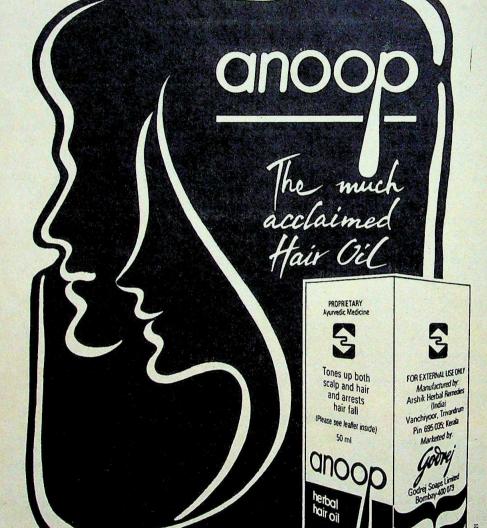
Caste has a stronger hold on the Indian psyche than religion, region or land. Caste is not an institution peculiar to Hindu society alone. You have castes among Muslims. You have castes among Christians. For example, Christian Harijans are not easily admitted into a church. In the north, we all tend to forget that at least 50 per cent of Muslims belong to backward classes: Ansaris, Mansuris, Qureshis.

The profile of bureaucrats belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is much higher than the profile of bureaucrats belonging to the OBCs. What does it show? It shows that people belonging to the OBCs are also in need of the reservation scheme. People talk of an economic criterion. I must draw attention to one specific example; in Karnataka between 1962 and 1973 when the principle of economic criterion was applied, it was found at the end of 1973 that 90 per cent of jobs had gone to Brahmins.

Take private industry. In our country, all projects are invariably so over-invoiced that even the promoter's equity is adequately taken care of. So people are starting industries without investing any money of their own, on the strength given to them by public institutions. How many Harijans have

### A heated moment during the closed-door debate





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been employed in the private sector? Now.

the public sector is out of fashion in India. The private sector is going in for an expanded role. But is anyone giving athought as to who they will employ? D.S. Sheth: I do not see reservations

as correcting the wrongs done in the past, or the Mandal Commission as some kind of collective vengeance. Reservation is a policy for the future. It isonly a very crucial aspect of a larger policy, as a part of which we had the removal of untouchability, the human rights act, the civil rights acts, and a whole lot of things, all of which were conceived to be seen as enabling the population to exercise their citizenship rights and equality with the others.

Affirmative action then becomes necessary. This cannot be left to the ongoing social processes. Therefore, one has to identify and lift those sections and bring them into the mainstream. Reservation for OBCs is older than that for SCs and STs. It was for historical reasons that it started from the south of India and they got it not as a gift: they fought for it. They might have collaborated with the British and all that but it was achieved through

that you have the vision of the caste system as if you are dealing with something absolutely unchanged from the times of Manu to Mandal. For centuries, these groups have been exploited and now comes the Indian nation state which tries to restore a particular balance, Historically, this is all errant nonsense. If you look at actual historical records, you will find

would come back and say there are 36 castes. So it was very clear that there was a problem. Secondly, I find a fantastic slippage of terms. We talk of affirmative action and of reservations as if these were the same things. In fact, it is very well known that in the United States, quotas are against the law. Affirmative action is not. It is against the law to have quotas in proportion to



### VEENA DAS

Professor of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics

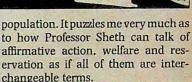
REDDY: You can't remove caste by turning a Nelson's eve. You can kill this monster only by launching an attack on it.

DAS: The British used the same argument.

> Since caste exists we must have caste censuses. Set a thief to catch a thief.

REDDY: No. use a thorn to take out a thorn.

S. JAIPAL REDDY General Secretary, Janata Dal



Sheth: I was only referring to them as comparable.

Das: They are not comparable. What I mean by affirmative action is that the target a university will set is very different from the target the bureaucracy will set. It is a very different principle of redressal.

Sheth: But a university will set a target that we need to have so much percentage of women and so much percentage of blacks.

Not in proportion Das: population.

Sheth: In proportion to the jobs they will have. Unfortunately for us, the Americans don't have a caste system.

Das: They don't have a caste system but they do have native Indians and Hispanics and blacks. They do not demand reservation for the vacancies and simply rely on the fair-mindedness of the institutions which should use their judgement in favour of the backward classes.

S.K. Goyal: Reservation has become so politically sensitive that we have not really discussed it in the economic framework of social transformation. There are landless labourers, there are SCs and STs. They have their lands now, but they do not bother to break the feudal system. It is because we could not implement our land reforms properly that the caste



political struggle. Besides Shudras creis still a heterogeneous group we can think of as backward who have political clout but are socially backward. What reservation does is decouple caste status from occupation Occupations are not meant to be bound to caste.

How do we look at the issue of merit h a modernising democratic society? Is merit a platonic virtue available to classes or is it competence which is cultivated through training, experience and exposure?

Veena Das: What I find most interesting is an entire series of master harratives which have been perfected. Part of this master narrative is the fact that you have very powerful Shudra including very powerful Shudra kingdoms. With the coming of the British, there was a presumption that India had an unchanging caste system. I find it interesting that the modern nation state, at least in India, completely inherits those colonial concepts and mythology.

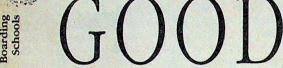
There is a historical methodology to show how these SC/ST categories were actually arrived at. I'll give you one example: the British repeatedly said that Indians were extremely unreliable, because you could send an enumerator into a region and he would come back and say there are 360 castes in that region. Another one

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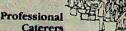
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system goes on. Such a large percentage remains uneducated. We are just ignor-

mains uneducated. We are just ignoring that aspect, the division between how much money we put in for higher ducation and how much for lower ducation. And now, instead of thinking in terms of mobilising more resources to help poorer sections we raise we superstructures. What has reservation given us? Look at the changes hat have taken place when we look at the 1979-80 data on the corporate elite: the first thing that comes to mind is that when you set up an enterprise, you generally hire your family people to the top positions, and then you have

people belonging to your own religion or caste—Marwaris will employ Marwaris, Reddys will employ Reddys.

Today you see change. The Birlasemploy not only Marwaris but Brahmins, and Parsis at top positions. The hold of the family weakening with

modernisation. The same may happen to the hold of caste. So instead of reservation, if you had thought of reforming the education system, you would have taken care of social transformation. Reservation is not the an-

wer for social change. You don't create any jobs but at the same time you divide society. Instead of harmony, we create dissension.

Chandan Mitra: I think the whole issue of reservation basically boils down to a question of politics, to a question of political power and it is, I think, the search of certain caste groups or certain social groups to legitimise the control they have come to exercise on some aspects of the

conomy which leads them to demand a share of government lobs, services and respectability. You can own 500 acres of land, yo can be the most important berson in the village, you can even have the Brahmins treating you as their head, but you are allimately denied a certain respectability if, at least, your family are not district magistates, police officers and so on. This is part of a certain colonial bent of mind.

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Bridge,

Reservation is basically a struggle for power by the newly-emergent dominant sections of the agricultural compinities, particularly in north India. It yaday community, and in Bihar today

you find a very strong Yadav non-Yadav realignment taking place in certain areas. And I expect this phenomenon to spread.

The question is whether we should extend reservations on a caste basis to certain sections which are, in fact, probably less deserving of reservations today than they were 40 years ago. Maybe there was some justification at

66

S.S. GILL

Secretary, Mandal Commission



GILL: Today there isn't even one secretary to the Government, from the backward classes.

SINGH: How long must society owe a debt to the so-called oppressed? Is there any limit or not? one point of time where these things had not been done fully.

Reddy: Why was it not done then? Nehru was by no standards a reactionary. Why couldn't the Indian state do it at that time?

Mitra: Don't you think we're going back in time?

Reddy: Unless we go back in time we will never be able to understand the current problem. The point I am trying to make is that at that time the OBCs didn'thave the political power to assert their rights. It is through a mature democratic process they have now acquired that.

Mitra: You have conceded my point precisely.

Reddy: No, I'm not conceding it. At that time the state was totally dominated by the upper castes. It was very easy to arrive at a very self-serving consciousness.

Mitra: Because of the manner in which the Mandal Commission report has been phrased and in which any kind of castebased reservations are organised, the benefits do not reach those who ought to be the beneficiaries.

Dileep Padgaonkar: In the eyes of a lot of people, it is conceptually a bizarre report. I say this because Jaipalji, when he began this discussion, referred to anti-reservation intellectuals. I don't know if there are anti-reservation intellectuals but I do know a lot of people who have grave reservations about the Mandal Commission report, who are not opposed to reservation as a principle of fostering social equity. The report is, in the eyes of many, so bizarre because of a certain

ahistoricity. A refusal also to take into account the fact that there has perhaps been more development in terms of consciousness over the past four decades than over the previous 400 years in our society. The whole attempt at Mandalisation was an assault on the process of the modernisation of Indian society. Secondly, it was seen as an assault on the consolidation of a national community in this country. The makers of our Constitution, and particularly

Ambedkar himself, were clear from the beginning about the rights of the individual. In fact, there is a famous speech of his where he said that the revolution that has been brought about by this Constitution has, for the

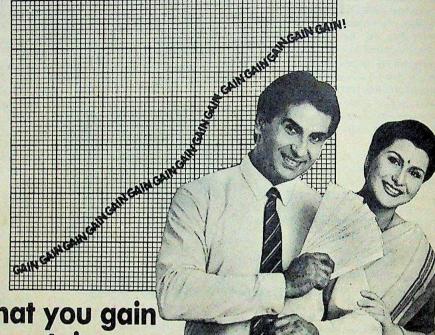


S.K. SINGH
Former
Foreign Secretary



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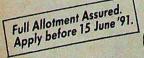
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first time in living memory, put not a community or a village, but the individual at the centre of things. The whole Mandal debate became dangerous precisely because political opportunity got mixed with the larger issue of social liberty. The fact also that many of the leaders of the social reform movements belong to the so-called upper castes is something we will have to answer for. I do hope that you will concede the point that there are decaste intellectuals who no longer react tothings around them merely in terms of caste.

Reddy: I belong to an upper caste. Padgaonkar: Well, I am glad you are de-caste too. But if you are going to gointo the question of roots, this has to be based in the extremely important debates that went on for about five days before the signing of the Poona Pact between Ambedkar and Gandhi. Now, when I see the great deification of Ambedkar at the moment, I am a little surprised because some of the most acerbic texts of Ambedkar were against Hinduism, against the caste system, against Gandhi. And now you and all political parties participating in his delfication. I welcome this because of this society's extraordinary reslience in turning into deities all those who disturbed it.

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But I do not know, from my own reading, of what's happened in north India, whether those who claim now to be OBCs have undergone psychological damage as extensive as has a Mahir or a Bhangi. One is not against historyations where the overall goal is not lost sight of: modernising society. consolidating national sentiment. If Jon can achieve it without confrontation, you will get a much better degree of consensus even for reservations for

Reddy: The Mandal report gathereddust for well over a decade before it was taken off the shelf and acted upon. Why didn't intellectuals who felt that

D.S. SHETH Senior Fellow, C.S.D.S.

SHETH: Vote banks are a part of the process of garnering a mandate. And I see nothing wrong with it.

MITRA: More attempts will be made to divide society in this race for stable vote banks.

SHETH: No. Democracy has its own self-correcting systems.

MITRA: I welcome vour confidence in democracy.

CHANDAN MITRA Editor, The Sunday Observer

reservations for OBCs were bad, try to evolve some method for helping them?

Das: You are setting the agenda by saying: why did you not have another policy for the OBCs? The issue here is that many people don't believe that caste, besides the SCs, should be the basic premise.

Reddy: I am referring to the failure of the Indian society.

### RESERVATIONS FOR WHOM?

SHETH: Is it an accident that India has performed much lower than very low developed countries on the education front, or is there some systemic maladministration here?

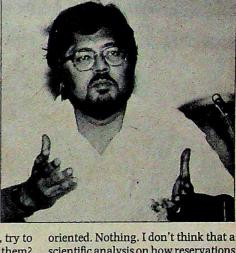
Padgaonkar: Yes, the failure to eradicate illiteracy is most extraordinary. The second major failure is in organising rural labour, which has led to all kinds of social tensions.

Reddy: There is a pattern in this failure. Certain vested interests have been very influential in getting our policy's priorities shaped.

Goyal: These are conspiracy theories. The problem is within the system. There have been certain limitations, and the system needs to be reformed. but not by saying that we have consciously done it harm.

Reddy: The vested interests, the long-threatened groups, are capable of tremendous self-deception.

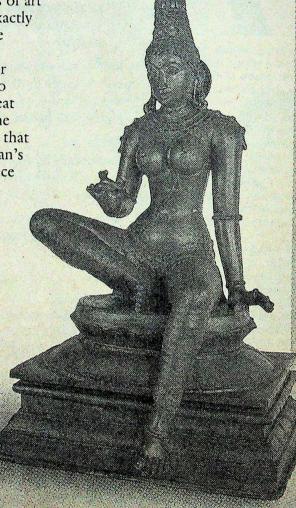
S.K. Singh: As far as the SC/ST reservation issue is concerned, two things should be mentioned: every 10 years in Parliament, when reservations have to be renewed. I regret to say that on the floor of the House nothing is done. It's all hollow, all non-research



oriented. Nothing. I don't think that a scientific analysis on how reservations have helped the SC/ST category until . now has surfaced. In the SC category, I'm afraid, the same families have a very large number of people filling in the slots. Then, there will be a battle between the SCs and OBCs in north India. I think I can say about Uttar Pradesh, that caste was not a question of heartburn till about four or five years ago. But today the whole thing has created an enormous caste consciousness. Further, as far as government jobs are concerned, I really don't think that it is bringing as much joy or satisfaction into our rural system just now as much as money. And there is plenty of money, even for a number of categories which come under the OBCs-the Lodhas in Bulandshahr and Aligarh, for example, and the Kurmis, these are very rich and educated people. You and I are talking all the time of the elite. Now, elites in what? Elites only in government? In

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education? In money? In Punjab and west-

em Uttar Pradesh, there is no dearth of people of this OBC category who are considered village chiefs. The enormous reality of the evolution of the Indian middle class, the urban middle class, in the last 12 years is something which will fill some of us with some pride and a great deal of anxiety because the upper middle class everywhere and in every society is an exremely selfish class. Kindly look into how much of this urban middle class and the entrepreneurs are OBCs. Finally, I don't think our political leadership has thought of how much corruption there is in the SC/ST certificate business. I don't think you have been to a naib tehsildar's office. If you pass on Rs 50 or Rs 100, it is easy to get certificates. This is an enormous problem you've created for yourselves.

We have to look at how good is the best education we can organise for our disadvantaged. We have done very little. The historical question is: how much in perpetuity should a society carry the debt which it has to repay to the so-called historically oppressed? Are you going to limit this or not?

Goyal: If, in fact, there was a case for reservations to start with, I think it should have been started in educational institutions. What you are trying to do through reservations is giving a certain economic advantage to certain sections of society. You are not changing the social structure.

I think a much better solution to this is to identify the handicaps and try to find some alternative to them, positive action. The private sector, for instance, with business priorities, will say, 'Look, we are looking for people who are useful to us, that's all.

Sheth: But can there be something like fair private employers? Goyal: The businessman is fair to

himself first. He's not going to follow your policies just because you want him to. It seems funny to me that if you're against reservation, then you're against the lower caste. If you're for reservation, then somehow or the other you have appropriated the right to speak on behalf of all progressive forces.

S.S. Gill: You persistently say that the report is bizarre and all that. That we Mandalites are doing the whole thing in a static historic context, and thereby petrifying society into a caste mold. If we are doing that, it's a grievous fault. There is a whole chapter, Chapter 5, in the report on the social dynamics of caste: what caste has lost on the ritual front, it has more than gained on the political front. Those restrictions have loosened much more in the cities than in the rural areas, for very obvious reasons. Another very strong criticism made was that Mandal divides society on

caste lines. It's a very naive assumption to say the caste divide was disappearing. All this is stated by people whom caste benefited. Actually, the whole thrust of Mandal is anti-caste, because the lower castes are the worst victims of the caste system.

When we went out to identify socially and educationally backward classes, we evolved 11 criteria. Only the first one has the castes or classes which are considered socially backward by others. We didn't seek caste, caste pursued us. It is quite amazing that now people who were earlier so allergic to the mention of class, because class smacked of Marxism and all that, have of late become the greatest champions of class.

A very venerable colleague of mine said: "You are not aware even though you're writing so much about Mandal, that in my house, in my mother's house, earlier a Scheduled Caste chap just couldn't enter. Now he can enter

D. PADGAONKAR Editor, The Times of India

PADGAONKAR: How can you make such comparisons? Don't you think swinging from Mahatma Buddha to Ambedkar is a bit far-fetched?

GILL: An exercise of social surgery always leads to

> destabilisation. It causes upheaval. I was only giving examples. I am not trying to equate Mandal with Buddha.

S.S. GILL Secretary, Mandal Commission



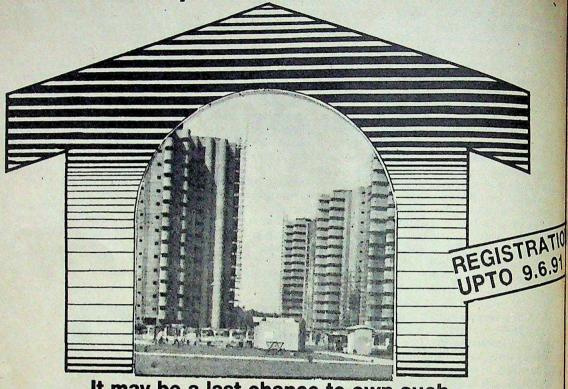


the kitchen." And I said: "After 200 years he'll be able to cook your food also. What a great concession you are making to society and you think that this can liberate society. You are allowing him to enter your kitchen because you are still exploiting his cheap wages, your wife is not prepared to do that job, and other servants, better class servants, are not prepared to work on those wages.'

If caste is not a dividing factor in India, then can you today-I'm talking of May 2, 1991-name to me the top executives in any of the business houses, industrial houses, commercial firms, banking institutions, financial institutions, public sector undertakings, private sector undertakings, Government of India bureaucracy, who belong to the lower castes. Today there isn't a single secretary to the Government who belongs to the SC or ST or to



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the backward class. And still if the upper gastessay that there is no caste division and that Mandal is bringing about caste consciousness in society, it is the height of sophistry. Mandal is destroying caste. Give them higher education, you say, better health. Very fine. How have we gone about it? In the First plan, we allocated 9 per cent of the resources for education. Today we are allocating 3 per cent. Why? It is not a lapse, nothing of the sort. My children went to Modern School, my grandchildren are going to Delhi Public School because it's supposed to be better. How does it hurt me if there are no school buildings in the villages, no teachers in those school buildings, no blackboards in those school buildings, not even

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alai, Mount ANDIGARA for the SCs, they said this damned idiot is going to destroy society. You can go back to history and find that people who were crucified were destabilisers. Mohammed was a destabiliser. These may be very high-sounding examples. But the fact is that any act of social surgery, social engineering, which is rapid enough, is bound to have some sort of destabilising effect on the ruling classes and they will always cry wolf. Economic criterion has nothing to do with Mandal. Let's be very clear: Mandal has nothing to do with the eradication of poverty. It's not a poverty eradication programme.



JAIPAL REDDY General Secretary, Janata Dal

S.K. GOYAL

Chairman, Research Advisory Committee,

**Planning Commission** 

REDDY: There is a pattern in the failure of society. Vested interests have been extremely influential in getting our policy priorities shaped.

GOYAL: I don't understand these conspiracy theories. It isn't a scientific way of examining problems in the system.

REDDY: The point right now is not so much to apportion blame but to see where our policies are faulty.

GOYAL: Why not look at the future instead?

Marx said that when a capitalist change comes around, they first take over power, then the means of production and then they come on top. But when a proletarian revolution comes about, the proletariat first grabs political power and then down below the economic equations change. What we're trying to do with Mandal is to change the power equation. Education is very important but education alone cannot transform society. I can give you thousands of examples: advertise the post of a clerk or a messenger and there will be a thousand applications. and you will see that out of those when we analyse whose children they are. we'll find that they are not mine or yours, they are the children of a commoner, of a porter or a landless labourer who has spent all his life's savings to educate them. And they are nowhere. What they get is the job of a postman, a clerk, on their own. Nothing else. Whereas we, I mean the upper castes, produce only geniuses. Our children-who are drug addicts, dropouts, delinquents, a shame to the fam-



drinking water, and if a teacher comes there at all, he works for the lumbardar of the village? Doesn't hurt me at all, so why should we allocate resources there? But look at the other side: class interest demanded that higher education be developed, there should be 11Ms, Ins, heart institutes, Escorts and Batra and other foundations so that even a lecher, a millionaire in his 70s, should be kept alive at a cost of Rs 50,000 per day. It doesn't hurt me if the infant mortality rate is very high, because y poor people's children die, their wives die in labour. It doesn't hurt me at all. Whether it is health or higher education, it's not a lapse of memory, failure of policy, it's naked class interou can't give me a single excepun to the rule. It's the distance which dvides, the disparities which divide between the rich and poor, strong and Weak, lower caste and upper caste. What Mandal does is to decrease these distances. Whenever there has been Social Surgery, there is destabilisation. And who are the greatest destabilisers of society in history? Mahatma Buddha Was one, Mahatma Gandhi was another. When Gandhiji started working



ily, a shame to society—own cars, bungalows, live in the greatest comfort and this is the sign of a meritocratic society. You can buy anything for your son. If nothing else, you pull strings and get him a licence, the damned fellow becomes a millionaire.

Padgaonkar: Would you give me a few minutes to recover from this sheer wealth of generalisations? I have a couple of questions. One, that there was an experts panel constituted by the Mandal Commission, and a very large number, I think perhaps all of them, after the report's partial implementation was announced, wrote of the methodological failures in that report. Second, you also had a research planning team of which you, Mr Gill, were a member and I find at least five out of those seven members have raised very serious objections about



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ign. Basically, Mandal has narrowed the creative space between the manager and the mullah and the mahant.

I was asked the other day how many Harijans I had on my editorial team, to which the answer was: "Look, this is an open system. Let's find out how many Harijans apply for jobs in newspapers. And if they don't apply, then you go back to the institutions where journalism is taught. There you will find that not many of them are there. And if you go further down to find out why, you realise that they are not there because a completely skewed educational system does not give them the opportunities."

I'dread the thought that you can hold this discourse and honestly show this extraordinary swing between Mahatma Buddha down to Ambedkar.

Gill: I was trying to say that wheneveryouperform social surgery there is always an element of destabilisation. I was not saying that Mandal is Buddha. those classes for whom entry into the middle class was systematically denied all these years.

Mitra: Professor Sheth, you made a very distinct statement that the middle class cannot be an issue in any

Sheth: That's why I have purposely not used the word 'elite'. I used the word 'middle class' as a class which dissolves other identities.

Goyal: First, what is the total number of jobs the Government has to offer

#### VEENA DAS

Professor of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics

DAS: We tend to talk of affirmative action and of reservations as though these were one and the same thing.

SHETH: When I mentioned the two

> concepts, I was simply referring to them as comparable.

DAS: No, they are not comparable.



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In fact, when Mandal gave the report, he didn't have a ghost of an idea that it Would ever be accepted. Now all political parties have been Mandalised so far as the selection of candidates is concerned. This time the number of backward class candidates being fielded by all the parties is far in excess of anyhing we've seen before. I think it is a move in the right direction because three-fourths of the country's populadon should have at least half the voice h the governance of the country. As or the dissent by experts, I want to say there can be no sociological survey accurate to six points decimal. If you allow a margin of error of 5 to 10 per centin 4,000 castes, 200 to 400 castes possibly have been misclassified.

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Sheth: Wherever reservations have been honestly implemented, they have been effective and they have served their purpose. It helped people of modernisation because it is dominated by the upper castes. As far as my knowledge of history goes, from Ram Mohun Roy to Ram Manohar Lohia, all kinds of modernising processes have originated from the middle class. What prompts you today to disregard the middle class as an agency of change and what class you think should be the agency of change?

Sheth: I think the middle class will be the agency of change. But then the character of the middle class and its culture is restricted and confined to only the upper castes. At one level, I would say, the kind of system which we have run so far is, at the macro level, capitalism by default and socialism by fraud. And that has largely to do with an upper caste culture of bureaucracy which held businessmen in contempt.

Goyal: What is middle class and what is elite?



and to whom? You are essentially reserving jobs for 1 per cent of those looking for jobs.

Now, on modernisation, I think modernisation means a little more movement of the organised sector. All old values start breaking down with modernisation. For a long time the Birlas resisted getting into shoes and leather garments, businesses seen as that of Chamars. But look at the figures now. The Brahmin community, especially in the south, has gone for leather exports. There is no taboo. Logic says that when modernisation takes place caste barriers start disintegrating.

Because of an excessive concern about the Mandal Commission debate. all major issues of policy at this general election have been bid goodbye. You are not discussing the issues of health, employment, agricultural labour, issues related to your indebtedness, both foreign and within India. We have distorted our priorities.

### RESOLVING THE CRISIS

PADGAONKAR: The fulcrum of power is shifting swiftly from the bureaucracy to entrepreneurship. From a kind of command administrative control, we are moving swiftly towards mechanisms dictated by the exigencies of the market.

The question of reservations will by and by become redundant because it will have been overtaken by several new forces being generated in our CROSS FIRE

society. Once the Government no longer is

the centre of the distribution of largesse, as it is today, the attraction of wanting to become a secretary to the Government or a deputy secretary orwhatever, is bound to cease.

Now, I think that there are just three things to be done: expand your educational opportunities for all. Improve on their quality. Bring in at least the minimal public health requirements, but above all make sure that your economic growth is the one that takes care of several social tensions. The divisive nature of the Mandal Commission comes in because the overall ideological climate in the country is changing, the nature of economic competition is changing and you have all kinds of opportunities.

Das: The trouble that many of us have is that we go into reservations for SCs and STs and from there we make the slip into reservations for other backward castes, as if we are dealing with a phenomenon of the same kind. They are not. In one case, there is a clear national consensus, in another there is not. I would make a distinction between reservation for the SCs because I think 22 per cent is something which an institution can handle in terms of really serious affirmative action. Ninety per cent is something that universities cannot.

Mitra: Mandal is an Ams-infected syringe which has been injected in the body politic and which will completely destroy some of the major progresses in social attitudes. The Mandal report as a whole is an even more pernicious document than it appears to most people. It talks of extending reservations down the line into educational institutions to the point where it even suggests that separate hostels be set up for backward class students. I suspect that there will be a move very soon to introduce reservations into the private

sector as well, because once you start on this populist track, there is actually no end. Mr Gill's party will find it absolutely impossible to control the demon it has let loose. The next promise will be that we shall force the Birlas to take 60 per cent backwards. I think the first thing on the national agenda, I can't put it more strongly, is to defeat the Mandal Commission report.

Sheth: Is there agreement that there are groups outside the SCs and STs in need of preferential treatment?

Das: Yes, but which kind of preferential treatment? American universities have had very aggressive programmes for affirmative action for the past 20 years. They have found over the last two years a decline of 46 per cent in black Ph.Ds. The sections which have benefited are basically the affluent Asian-Americans and there has been some improvement on the Hispanic front. It is quite clear to me that if one is evolving the process of affirmative action, one would have to address the specifics and not a generality like that of the OBCs.

Padgaonkar: Just to this business of reservation being delegit, mised....Yes, the danger exists but we exists primarily because once again Mandal is the culprit, partly because of the motivations that lie behind Mandal and partly also because of the obvious political opportunism that lay at the time of announcing the part implementation of Mandal. The result is that you are using the same brush to tar everybody again and again.

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People who are already pretty prominent in the political arena getthe cake. You see the kind of people who become MLAs, MPs and so on and the trend is growing. The very nature of electoral arithmetic suggests that you have to expand your base from where you draw your political personnel, and so it is happening on the economic front. It is true that 80 per cent of these may be poor and oppressed but the fact is you can tot up similar figures for other communities who don't fall within the ambit of the OBCs. I share Chandan's apprehension-that you will get this populism entering into

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S.K. SINGH Former Foreign Secretary

SINGH: Muslims think if Mandal happens, they too can demand reservations.

GILL: From the people I've met, I think Muslims are supportive as they will gain.

SINGH: You and I have spoken to very different people.

> GILL: Naturally. The class orientations are so different.

S.S. GILL Secretary, Mandal Commission



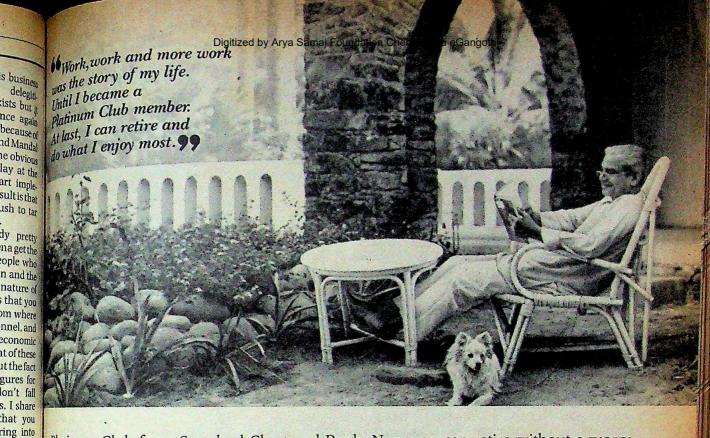
other areas as well. For instance, the Lohia-kind of socialism: you know they nationalise land, nationalise this nationalise that. And the other is where caste and religious fundamentalism fuse, which is again what Mandal is bringing about. People enbraced Islam or Sikhism or Christianity to get out of the clutches of caste domination. I am surprised when see Muslim leaders going along with this Mandal business. I don't know whether they realise that something will affect them very deeply.

Singh: I think the Muslims are saying, well, if Mandal happens today we can ask for our reservation tomorrow. Then we will be back to Minto-Morley and Montague-Chelmsford.

Gill: The Muslims are supporting it because they know that a lot of them



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will benefit from it. I gather this from hun-

dreds of people I have been meeting. Singh: It seems you and I have been

talking to very different people.... Gill: Naturally. The class orientations are so different.

Sheth: Chandan, I think a lot has been said about these vote banks. As if vote banks are reserves of bonded labour in elections. Vote banks are a part of the process of garnering a mandate. If Mandal was bad. nationalisation of banks was worse.

Mitra: There is nothing wrong in the attempt to create a vote bank on the basis of reservations. But it's a

question of political morality. Sheth: Your fears are exaggerated. Democracy has its own self-correcting systems.

Mitra: I welcome your confidence in democracy. From whatever I have understood through my travels in Uttar Pradesh. Mandal is not electrifying the masses at all. It is quite possible that V.P. Singh may not succeed in Mandalising society but the seeds have been sown.

Padgaonkar: Is Mandal a symptom of the terminal illness of a society or a symptom of its rejuvenation? There are those of us who fear that, in fact, it is a symptom of the former. I think again and again that the commitment here to reservations for the SCs/STs is pretty strong but not enough is being done in the right direction. You might have individuals or communities who deserve these reservations but you should go about it in a far more circumspect manner that has been the case so far and, to the extent possible, avoid politicising the issue because then consensus tends to become shaky and breaks down.

Singh: If the Mandal Commission report was implemented, the bureaucracy will be bullied by politicians and bought by the purchasers, because the codes of honour and conduct have broken down under pressure. And in Mandalisation of the bureaucracy. I don't think you will find bureaucrats capable of standing up to both the bully and the purchaser.

Das: I say that a democratic trust is partly broken through reservations. I will give you one example. The University Grants Commission, following parliamentary discussion some years ago, said that there is no such thing as minimal qualification of an

institution. Anyone who has a prior degree has a right to admission. I have sometimes seen a student come and get zero in the admission test, and he will get the zero sometimes because of the sheer contempt that, 'I don't need to pass'. Such a student will benefit very little from his interaction with me. So I insist that the problem there is surely

CHANDAN MITRA

Editor, The Sunday Observer



MITRA: Should we extend reservations to castes which are less deserving today than they were 40 years ago?

REDDY: Nehru was no reactionary. Why couldn't the Indian state do it at that time?



JAIPAL REDDY General Secretary, Janata Dal



not that you go in for reservation but free the institutions.

You set your targets, say, in five years how many SC and ST doctorate candidates you will be able to produce Then I think you will be able to produce them.

Gill: When you recruit people who had been deprived in every way, and expect them to perform as well as people who have all benefits, it is quite understandable if they fail. So in this process of social engineering, simply to upgrade the educational qualifications of the dispossessed does not suffice. Bureaucracies are at the receiving end

of a lot of blame, and very deservingly so. But unfortunately the bureaucracy is looked upon in the villages and semi-urban areas as a very prestigious career, When you induct people into the bureaucracy they too become a part of the power structure. When we talk of politics and vote banks, I think we should be clear about one aspect of liberal democracy. You may call them lobbies, pressure groups, or vote banks or whatever you like, they

are an integral part of our democratic system. In this, an element of populism comes in, whether it is Garibi Hatao or it's the hype on keeping the country together or Jai Jawan Jai Kisan or whatever. This kind of populism is a part of any democratic polity. Mandal is just a metaphor. It's not meant to be a package of solutions.

Reddy: Because of reservation, today the Harijan community is far better organised than it was, say, when Ambedkar was still alive. It would seem that Ambedkar dead is more alive and kicking than Ambedkar

alive, because the SCs who avail of reservations in both education and employment have now emerged as a considerable force in the political scenario. If Kanshi Ram is being courted by many parties, it is because of the support he has been able to mobilise from the educated and the employed sections of the backward communities. They may constitute only a very minuscule section of that community. But then every community

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needs an elite. The Mandal approach is the best way to attack casteism. Caste is an unpleasant but universal reality and you can't wish it away by turning a Nelson's eye. You can kill this monster only by taking full notice of it.



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the discerning French are now looking beyond Pierre Cardin, Yves Laurent and Christian Dior.

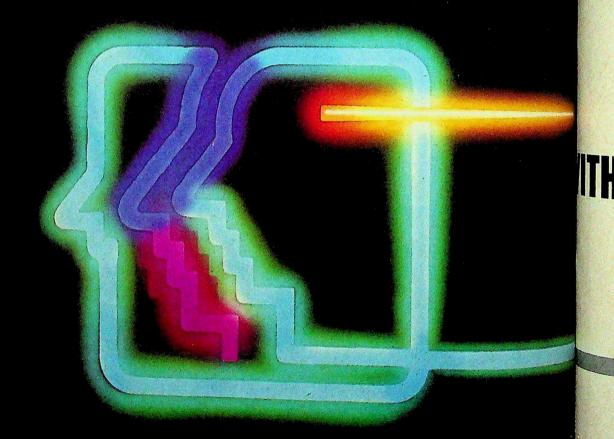
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**ECONOMY** 

## **ADDRESSING** THE REAL

The Indian economy is in serious trouble. The winner of this general election will face an uphill task cleaning up the mess. The immediate priorities are re-establishing credibility rule coarse among international lenders, curbing expenditure and tackling inflationary pressures.

By PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA with bureau reports

OR every illusory slogan churned up by the heat and dust of electioneering, there is a more substantive side as well. Think the 1991 elections are about stability, Mandal and mandir? Perhaps. But look closely: the cry for stability that strikes a chord in the electorate could well be about prices: Mandal should be about creating new jobs and not merely apportioning what's there; and the mandirs most citizens would be keen on building (or rebuilding) are industries—the temples of modern India, as Jawaharlal Nehru called them.

Thus far, economic issues seem to have taken the backseat. But the men who take up the front seats in the next Parliament will find that slogans will not drive the wolf from the door. Nor will it do anything to tackle the economic mess.

True, the country has seen worse before. In the ship-tomouth days of the '60s, India's foreign exchange reserves were down to just four weeks' import needs in 1965. In the oilshocked inflationary '70s and early '80s, annual price

increases as measured by the wholesale price index went There are n double digits roughly once in three to four years. In control Kesari the latter half of the '80s were the boom-boom years, discoveri growth well above the 3.5 per cent Hindu rate and infa relatively in check.

But in January this year, the country was back to thell situation in terms of foreign exchange reserves and inflation rate was surging to the teens; the external decorate the crossed Rs 100,000 crore and the internal one is two-2 half times as big. An IMF bail-out saved the external situal but a second approach for a bigger loan may be necessary by sukdeb the elections. The money will come with strings attached in its own interests the country needs to address itself: "tind a basic questions: how prices can be brought under con how the country can adopt policies that promote en jukhan, 32 ment; how the foreign exchange crunch can be eased abrical cou Indian industry can be made more competitive; how thatta indu public sector can be made to perform better; and, how thing institu Government can live within its means (see following stort a decent





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### rKamala Kesari can make ends meet

swife of a Bihar mment cashier in M. Kamala Kesari, compares her whold's economics with of the country. "Like Coremment, we're in a grap," says she. The thly income of 1500 earned by her and lasts barely three b. "Then we have to aborrowing." She has aldown on items like deream. She recalls credibility whe coarse rice price has gup from Rs 4.50 a kg on the Congress(I) was in rain the state to Rs 5.80 ringthe Janata Dal regime lo Rs 6.50 today. index went there are millions of

THE PERSON PRICES: PINCHING POCKETS Point-to-point rise in the Wholesale Price Index between Mar. 1990 - Mar. 1991 24.4 gug Edibl Oils

WHY PRICES HAVE RISEN

THE Gulf war-induced hike in petroleum prices is certainly one reason. But the unusual aspect of this year's rise in agricultural prices has been the complete absence of a seasonal decline-usually witnessed from November onwards-despite three good crop years. For instance, rape and mustard seed prices have zoomed by 56 per cent in the year up to March 1991, despite a favourable harvest. Overall, the rise has been very high in items like edible oils, pulses, fruits and vegetables. "Unlike in the past, prices have not gone up this time due to supply constraints, but because of cost-push factors, induced by higher energy costs and government policies aimed at raising food procurement prices (roughly 15 per cent for

cereals like wheat and rice)," explains S.L. Rao, director-general of the National Council of Applied Economic Research.

Adding to the problems have been the overhang of the Government's big revenue deficits (Rs 29,000

crore over the last two years) and rising money supply (over 30 per cent growth in calendar 1989 and 1990), both of which have put lots of money in people's hands. The situation was thus tailor-made for demand-pull inflation as well.

And the bad news may be yet to come. After three good crop years, 1991-92 may well be the year when food production may fall short of projections since a sub-normal monsoon is a real possibility. That will serve as fuel to the inflationary fires of 1990-91. Inflation is one legacy of the last two years that the next government will have to tackle on a war footing. And it is unfortunate that the crucial issue of rise in prices has been effectively drowned out in the Mandal-mandir cacophony.

### e necessary sukdeb Sadhukhan at find a good job

under con i years ago, Sukdeb comote en Jukhan, 32, completed a be eased thinical course from sloute industrial titive; in the same industrial c; and, however, and the same institute. He hasn't allowing stored a decent job yet. diocre people like me and employment only have the right ical connections ldon't have any," wkhan complains. awhile, he keeps body bul together by aming odd jobs like lying material at ruction sites or ering packets for we couriers. adhukhan is one ple of an remployed Indian, teas it is difficult to hale the extent of eremployment in the the numbers bred with the ayment exchanges rising (see chart).

### WHY JOB OPPORTUNITIES AREN'T RISING FAST ENOUGH

MPLOYMENT exchange statistics are unreliable, and in reality, unemployment—by some L'definitions—may actually have come down in the recent past. A recent study by economists B.S. Minhas and P. Visaria-based on data collected by the National Sample Survey Organisation and using three concepts of unemployment (daily, weekly and longterm)—indicates that in the case of rural men, daily unemployment fell from 7.5 per cent in 1983 to 4.6 per cent in 1987-88. For rural women, the drop was from 9 per cent to 6.7 per cent. At the same time, long-term and weekly unemployment went up

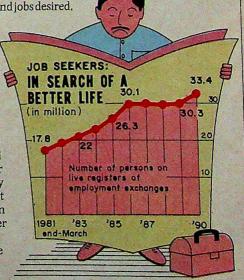
during this period. The problem: the unemployed want quality jobs, not any form of employment. The root cause is the mismatch between the kinds of jobs available and jobs desired.

The country's lopsided education system. which emphasises higher education at the expense of primary education, has created a distorted social value system which does not uphold the dignity of labour.

The reason why jobs aren't growing fast enough is the labour law. In India, it is virtually impossible to retrench labour; hence businessmen often prefer contract labour to permanent staff. Not surprisingly, the number employed by the private organised sector has remained more or less constant over the last decade at around 7.4 million. Only public sector jobs have been on the rise, but even here the rate of growth has slowed down from over 6 per cent in the early '60s to just over 2 per cent in the late '80s.

The next government needs to tackle the anti-employment ethos created by rigid laws with utmost urgency.

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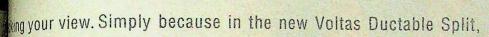


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### Why Varun Shipping may face choppy seas

THE Bombay-based Varun Shipping is currently in the process of mising Rs 175 crore, much of it in hard currency, to expand its fleet. Four months ago, the company was quite confident that it would be able to. Now, with the Reserve Bank damping down hard on foreign exchange releases. Varun Shipping may have wencounter rough weather. Confesses G. Subramaniam, vicepresident, corporate development: "There is uncertainty."

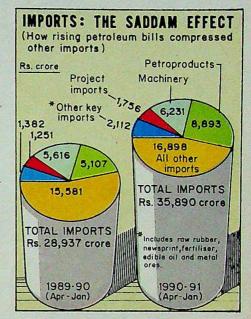
To be sure, all industries which depend on imports have been affected by the Government's sledgehammer attempts to curb foreign exchange releases. The curbs have come on top of the creeping devaluation of the rupee.

### WHY HARD CURRENCY MAY BE HARD TO GET

EVALUATION hasn't narrowed India's trade gap for reasons that may have little to do with the exchange rate. Reason: one-third of the country's imports are unavoidable, since these include items like crude oil, fertiliser, edible oil, rubber and metal ores. So no matter what it costs, the country has to import them. This year, the higher bill for imported and the state of the country has to import them. This year, the higher bill for imported and the state of the country has to import them. This year, the higher bill for import them the state of the state of the country has to import them. This year, the higher bill for import them the state of thepetroproducts has had the net effect of compressing all other imports, including machinery needed by industry (see chart).

The late-January loan from the IMF pulled the country's balance of payments from the brink of disaster since foreign exchange reserves had come down to below two weeks' import requirements. But this wasn't enough. In April, the Government feared that for the first time the country may default on its loan repayment obligations andthe Reserve Bank moved in promptly and imposed drastic curbs on hard currency releases.

Though the situation should improve by September, industry will have to live with the prospect of some kind of an import squeeze. The challenge before policy-makers is to see that the squeeze does not throttle the productive sectors of the economy. In the medium and longer term, the Government should try and attract more direct foreign investment as a means of reducing dependence on external commercial borrowings.



### **Why Thermax cannot** export more

THE Rs 280-crore, Punebased Thermax group of companies is a premier exporter of engineering products—its net foreign exchange earnings have gone up ninefold in the last six years to over Rs 45 crore. So what's the problem? Answer: the group could have exported much more had the Government simplified its procedures. Says a group spokesman: We are supposed to receive raw materials at international prices, but reimbursements get delayed by a year.'

Thus, the group faces anuphill task marketing its products in a competitive international trading environment. In other countries, the Government would have been bending backwards to assist a group like Thermax.

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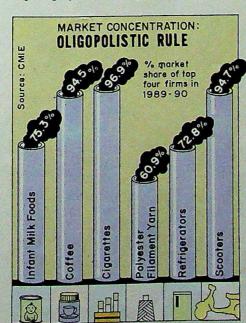
### WHY INDIAN INDUSTRY IS NOT COMPETITIVE

TF the Indian system is such that performers can't be rewarded and laggards (for Lexample, those who fail to meet their export obligations) penalised, there is no room for optimism on the external trade front. It is indeed strange that despite being perennially strapped for hard currency, the bureaucracy should have placed so many hurdles for exporters. "It takes five years and five people running around government offices to get an export project off the ground," claims S.P. Agarwal, president, Delhi Exporters'

Association.

Procedural hitches comprise only one aspect of the export sector's problems. Of far greater significance is the lack of competition at home, which makes Indian products shoddy. Safe behind high tariff walls (for instance, customs duties are around 200 per cent for synthetic yarn and electronic components and 100-150 per cent for plastic raw materials), much of Indian industry is ruled by cosy oligopolies that milk the consumer dry. Market concentration levels in several industry segments are high enough to deter new competitors—and the only worthwhile competitors, the international ones, are kept out by fiat.

To take India into the international league, the Government has to start reducing the levels of protection to domestic industry in stages so that eventually the country can compete in the world league.



## THE PSYCHO-ANALYSING (Shouldn't you know what you what

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### Why New Bank is in the red

FOR the first time in its history, New Bank of India incurred a loss of Rs 9.89 core in 1989-90. The management had initially tried to show a profit of around Rs 1 gore. But the Government discovered attempts to fudge accounts and suspended four senior imployees. Things haven't changed much since then. Official sources claim that the bank has paid "inadequate attention" to rcover dues involved in litigation which went up from Rs 11 crore to Rs 13 gore over the last year.

New Bank's problems meneither new nor unique. United Commercial Bank too went into the red in 1989-90 with a loss of wound Rs 40 crore. This was the first time that two nationalised banks incurred losses.

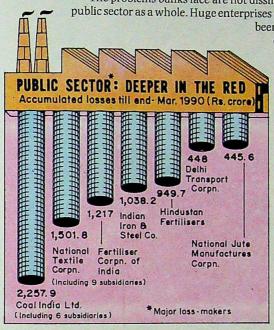
### WHY THE PUBLIC SECTOR GOBBLES UP PUBLIC MONEY

NDIAN banks are hamstrung by statutory obligations to loan much of their funds to so $oldsymbol{1}$  called priority sectors like agriculture and small industries. Moreover, their viability has been sharply eroded in the last five years, first on account of loan melas and then by the decision to waive farm loans. So far over Rs 7,100 crore has been written off, but the banks will be compensated to the tune of only Rs 3,000 crore by the end of March 1992.

The problems banks face are not dissimilar to those encountered by the public sector as a whole. Huge enterprises with enormous investments have been set up ostensibly to meet the

> essential needs of the public. But these have become transformed into basket cases which swallow scarce public funds at an alarming rate. Worse, the enterprises are run like personal fiefdoms of unscrupulous politicians in power and their overweening bureaucratic lackevs.

The results are there for all to see. Of the 244 Central public sector undertakings in the country, 62 had incurred continuous cash losses for three years till 1989-90. These lossmakers accounted for around 10 per cent of the total investment in the public sector. The biggest culprits include units in the coal, textiles and fertiliser sectors (see chart).



### **Why Mr Finance Minister** tan't balance his books

AT a recent meeting of tax Micials, Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha apressed surprise at the steep fall in collections. With good reason. Around mid-February, it was tstimated that tax collections would be & 58,916 crore in 1990-91. Two months later, it was realised that actual collections were more than & 3,300 crore lower. With the tax cake shrinking, it's no wonder he finance minister can't harrow the budgetary deficits. But there is mother side to any bookbalancing act: pruning expenditure. If the Government is teetering lowards bankruptcy, it is because of its inability to in expenditure, the by pruning lefence expenditure, or by outing subsidies.

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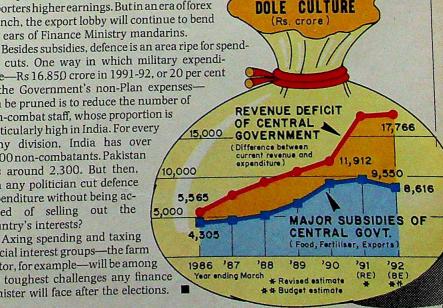
### WHY IT IS DIFFICULT TO CUT EXPENDITURE

INANCE Minister Sinha had hoped to "better target" food subsidies (Rs 1,800 crore) by withdrawing the ration cards of over a million income tax payers. But he couldn't present a full-fledged budget. Plans for reducing fertiliser subsidies (1991-92 estimate:  $Rs\,4.520\,crore)\,will face tough opposition from the fertiliser industry, which fears a drop in a constant of the constant of$ assured profits. The farm lobby, of course, opposes any hike in fertiliser prices which haven't been raised for eight years. As for export subsidies (Rs 2,316 crore), the question is

whether they can be gradually eliminated since the depreciation of the rupee anyway gives exporters higher earnings. But in an era of forex crunch, the export lobby will continue to bend the ears of Finance Ministry mandarins.

ing cuts. One way in which military expenditure-Rs 16.850 crore in 1991-92, or 20 per cent of the Government's non-Plan expensescan be pruned is to reduce the number of non-combat staff, whose proportion is particularly high in India. For every army division. India has over 8,800 non-combatants. Pakistan has around 2.300. But then, can any politician cut defence expenditure without being accused of selling out the country's interests?

Axing spending and taxing special interest groups—the farm sector, for example—will be among the toughest challenges any finance minister will face after the elections.



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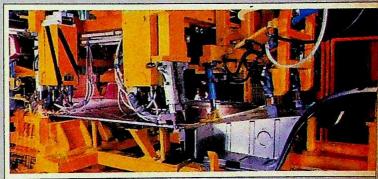
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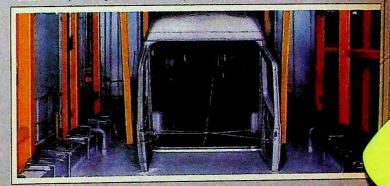
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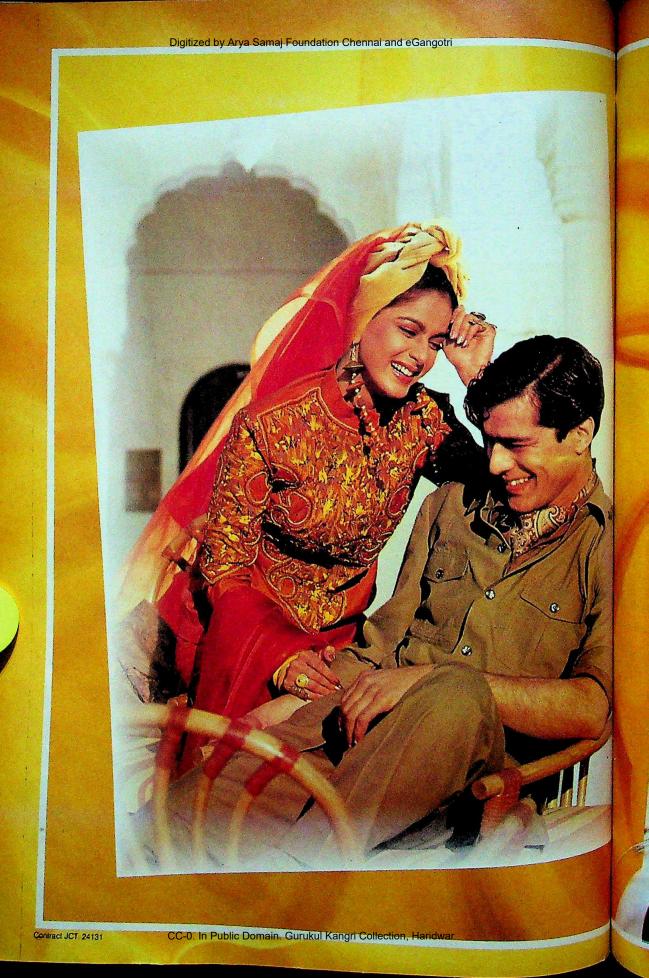


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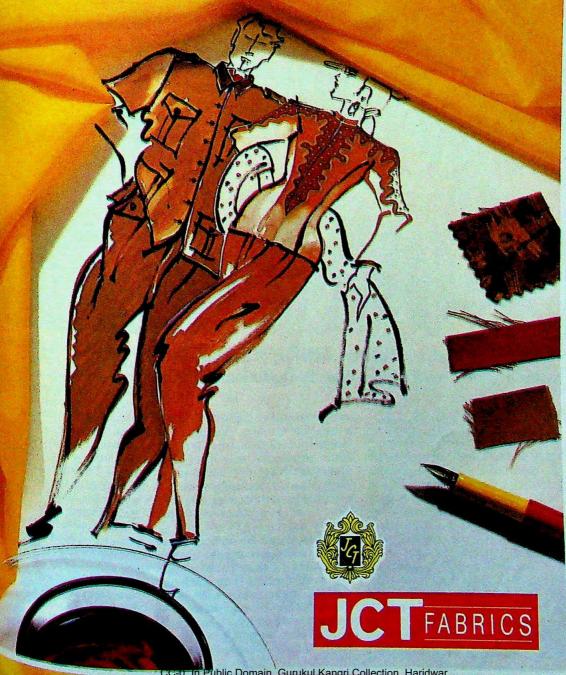


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SUITINGS . SHIRTINGS . DRESS MATERIALS



BANGLADESH

Tardy relief work prolongs the suffering of a populace ravaged by the 12-hour cyclone that killed about half a million.

Text by ARUN CHACKO in Bangladesh Photographs by BHAWAN SINGH

IKE a bizarre sepulchre sculpted by the howling winds, the remains of the ship Comfort Marine stand on a coastal road amid the destruction around as the stench of death and decay wafts across. The stranded ship is a stark symbol of the unprecedented havoc wreaked by merciless elemental forces over the coastal areas of Bangladesh. By the time the 12-hour-long storm and a 17-st-high tidal wave expended their fury on April 29, about half a million people lay dead and the hapless country had suffered incalculable economic damage. The destruction was on a scale

rarely witnessed on this planet.

Whether it was Kutubdia or Sandweep Island, Anowara or Chokoria on the mainland, one moment there were communities of 10,000 or more. Three hours later there was absolutely nothing. Just an enormous sheet of salt water dwarfing everything save the tall palm trees.

Zaheer Ahmed, the security guard of Comfort Marine, is among the few who were in the vortex of the cyclone and lived to tell the story of the winds and waves of death. Says he: "The waves were so high and intense, the five of us on board could not remain on deck. So we climbed up the crane to a protected area. We could not see anything, not

even the person next to us. Complete shattered, we really did not kno whether we were alive or dead. Il to hammed stayed up there from eleven in the ne ince employ to six the next morning. You can image took ine our shock at finding where we had neck-deep come to rest."

Many can't even imagine how the was 10-Many can't even imagine and the cataclysmic dimbed wa lived through the cataciysta or hung or heaval. The worst damage was in the worst damage. by the enormous tidal wave. It swall the wal heavily populated areas severally ones, metres inland along a 240-km cost as, includ stretch, starting 65 km east of the matched stretch, starting 65 km east of matched port city of Chittagong, going southtrace. True port city of Chittagong, going their roots, wards to the beach resort of Cox's Barriots, and all the offshore islands.

d all the offshore islands.

Many thickly populated islands being people with the best of the populated islands. Many thickly populated is the people tens of thousands of lives. From the people tens of thousands of lives. From the people tens of thousands of lives. tens of thousands of lives. From the series of thousands of lives. From the series of there is endless devastation as a count to get eye can see. There is water every the away. Other eye can see. There is water except making it a huge swamp, except making it a huge swamp, except may. Other small pockets of dry land.

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Devastated Sandweep Island; (top left) body washed ashore

not kind to dead. What was a state of the st in Sandweep Island. Near the ne how that was 10-ft high. People desperclysmic was 10-it high. People despending the walls or roofs to save their lysmic or moded walls or roofs to save them was inflicted by thing on to something for five was influenced by the water receded. They were several in larky ones. Roofs were blown off to the man thatched structures vanished cox's Barrante in their roots, and little trace was left tage coastal population. islands light coastal population.

Hislands people died instantly as the

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From the based in. Ali explained. "Those as far as a saway. Others had their houses except to not hem, or were hit by corrustions heets and pinned down. We just survived by holding on to the beams supporting the ceiling.'

HE official tally of casualties is now approximately 1.3 lakh. But this is not based on fact. No one knew exactly how many people lived in the affected areas in the first place. Many of the worst affected areas are still inaccessible, and no official has set foot there since the tragedy.

By the end of last fortnight, most of the affected coastal Bangladesh was still under knee to waist-deep salt water. The most horrifying was the sight of thousands of rotting corpses and animal carcasses either floating in flooded fields or embedded in the embankments. Thousands of other bodies were being regularly washed up on the beaches as the sea regurgitated them.



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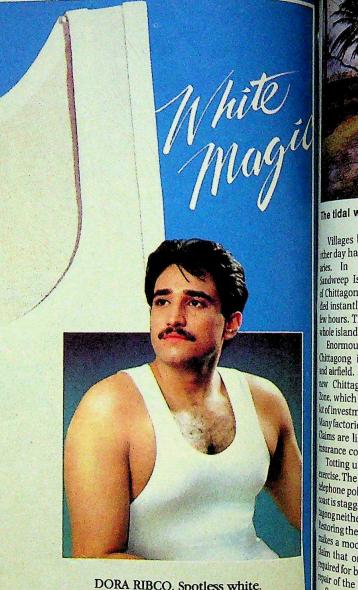
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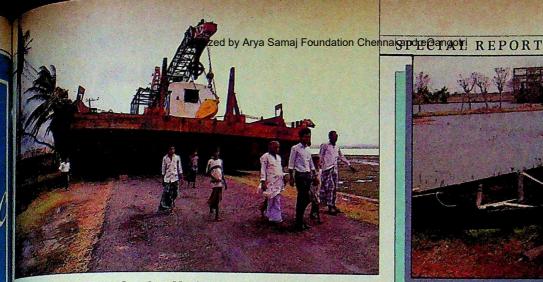


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The tidal waves lifted Comfort Marine to a road 2 km from the sea

Villages bursting with life till the ther day have become hellish morturies. In Rehmetpur village of Sandweep Island, 50 km south-east d Chittagong, at least 5,000 people ad instantly. Others struggled for a twhours. The casualty figure for the whole island is believed to be 50,000.

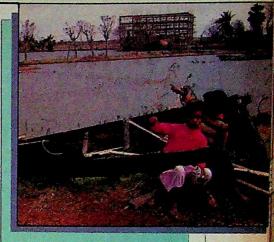
Enormous damage was done to thittagong itself including the port and airfield. Several factories and the w Chittagong Export Processing line, which had recently attracted a ktofinvestment, have been badly hit. Vany factories are complete write-offs. daims are likely to bankrupt several burance companies.

Totting up the losses is a daunting tercise. The damage to electricity and dephone poles and cables all over the wast is staggering. South-east of Chitgong neither services exist any more. latoring them will cost a fortune. This tes a mockery of the Government that only \$ 1.3 billion will be muired for both short- and long-term mair of the economy.

Over 40 Bangladesh Air Force and sitting on the runway, includ-Mig 19s and helicopters. have been reduced to wrecks. The tidal wave inundated the airfield bringing with it at least one fishing vessel which sits where aircraft should be. Some planes are still lying in shallow ponds. There has been intense criticism over the air force's failure to fly out those aircraft to safer areas, especially when it had three days' warning. The official explanation is that there were not enough pilots to do so.

Meanwhile, several ships in Chittagong Harbour have also found their way on to dry land. Today several sit astride roads blocking traffic. The Singapore registered Comfort Marine which has a huge crane, was working on a new jetty for the last month. Its two heavy anchors snapped like string. First it was swept out to sea, and then swept back inland.

cyclone—even a small one—is an awesome experience. First the wind suddenly begins to pick up speed. Then dense black clouds, initially an ominous dark speck on the horizon, sweep in. Day becomes night. Thunderroars. Lightning flashes vertically like streaks of death reaching out



#### MANWARA, 10, and **ANWAR HUSSAIN, 8**

They lost their mother in Chittagong when the sea water lashed through their hut near the coast. Fortunately, their father, four sisters and two brothers had taken shelter on nearby high ground. But their mother had refused to leave the house. The following day, they found her body roughly two miles from their home.

to the earth in a terrifying, serrated. blinding flash.

Then the rain starts in thick grey sheets, reducing visibility to nil. And dry land quickly becomes a sheet of water, then a flood. In a few moments everything-houses, human beings, cattle and crops-are swept away, often leaving no trace of human habitation. This, on an average, happens 12 times a year to Bangladesh.

But on April 29, fierce winds sometimes approached 233 km an hour and rain began at around six in the eve-

Chart by PRANAB DUTTA

### COUNTDOWN TO DISASTER



PRIL 26TH Warning of impending cyclone from the meteorological office.



PRIL 29TH 6.00 p.m. High velocity winds

exceeding 230 km/h commenced followed by heavy rain.



#### **APRIL 30TH**

1.00-2.00 a.m. Waves 17-20 ft. high swept several miles inland immediately washing away entire communities and disrupting the infrastructure totally.

# How to think positive when there's no power.



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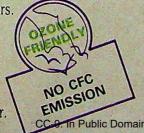
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acially too, you can relax. Your operating costs are <sup>aby50</sup>%. Also 100% depreciation in the first year itself, Syour cash flow undisturbed.

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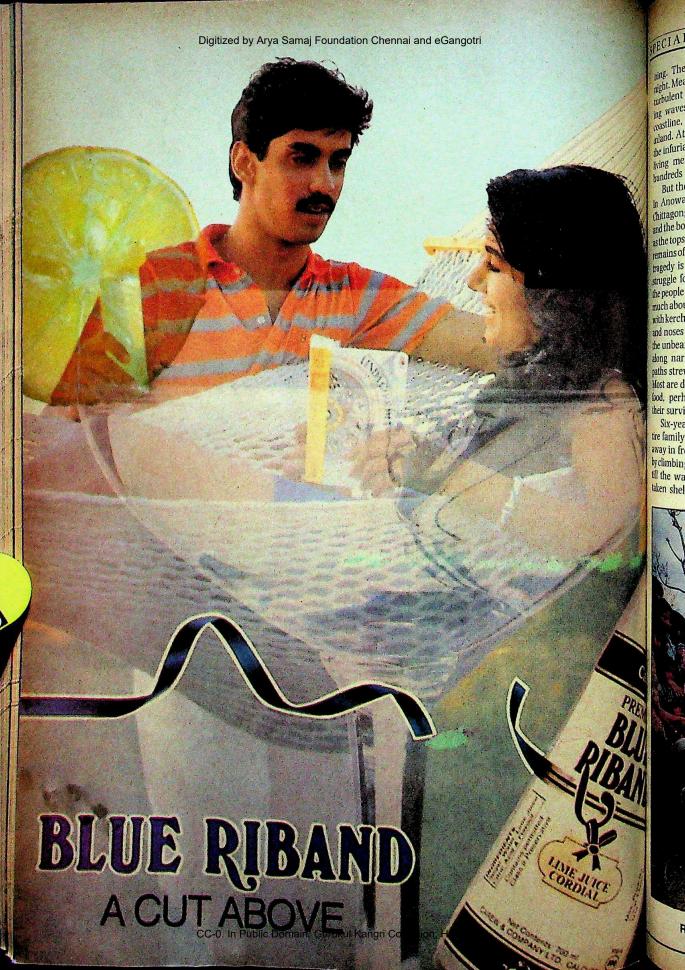
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In Anowa Chittagon and the bo asthe tops remains of tragedy is struggle fo the people much abou with kerch and noses the unbea along nar paths stre Most are d food, perh

Six-yea tire family away in fr byclimbin till the wa taken shel

mog. They continued well into the men. Meanwhile, the sea began to get urbulent and to swell. Ever-increasing waves began to crash into the mastline, coming further and further pland. At around two next morning, the infuriated sea did what no one in wing memory has seen it do-kill hundreds of thousands.

But the horror does not end there. h Anowara, on the mainland near thittagong, shallow graves were dug and the bodies hurriedly interred. And asthetopsoil is washed away, the gory mains of the dead are unearthed. The tragedy is so overwhelming, and the sruggle for survival so intense, that the people are too overcome to do very much about it. So the surviving people, with kerchiefs tied around their mouth and noses to protect themselves from the unbearable stench, gingerly walk along narrow strips of raised soggy paths strewn with stinking dead fish. Most are desperately looking for some food, perhaps medicines, to ensure their survival.

Six-year-old Alauddin lost his entire family. His parents were washed away in front of his eyes. He survived byclimbing up a tree and staying there ill the water receded. Today he has taken shelter in the house of a local official, where he occasionally gets some airdropped food. But 10-year-old Karim Ali was not so lucky. He cannot find his parents, whom he suspects were also washed away. He had managed one roti the previous day. Relief food is not getting to more than 10 per cent of the affected population leaving the rest to fend for themselves.

HE struggle for survival is an uphill one. In the absence of any meaningful relief measures, the surviving population is starving. They have no potable drinking water since salt water has got mixed with it. They are afflicted with diarrhoeal disease, gastro-enteritis and even cholera. Without medicines available, more have begun to die. And many more will.

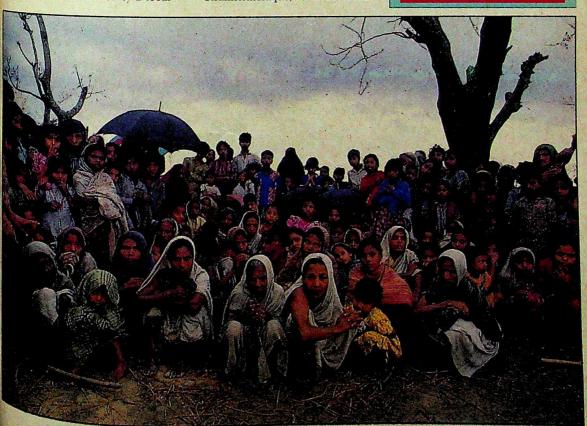
There is a terrible shortage of food in the affected areas and especially in the islands. Existing food stocks were destroyed during the cyclone, as stinking, drying grain on the streets testifies. Fresh water fish are dying because of sudden salinity in the water. Choppy seas prevent supplies coming in from the mainland. Prices are rocketing. People do not have any money, having lost everything.

Shamshul Haque, a small farmer in



#### **RUHUL AMIN, 45**

A petty farmer in Anowara, Amin lost five of his 10 children, and his mother-in-law. "It was pitch dark and I couldn't see anything," he recounts. "As the waves hit, I couldn't handle that many children." He found their bodies under the rubble the next morning. The rest of the family survived by clinging to the poles of the house.



Refugees scramble and scrap for the meagre relief that has managed to reach them

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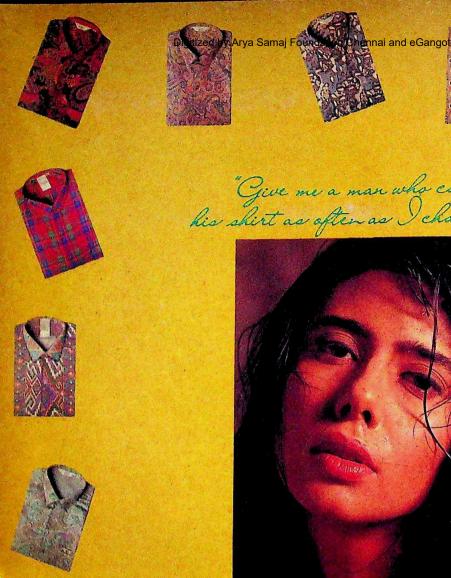
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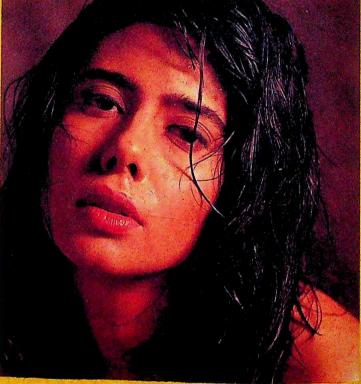
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Ope Alarkar Cinema, Laipat Nagar, New Delhi 110 024. Tal: 6832066. BLICHTAT TO FIETH SHORT BUT HELD THE SHORT STORE SHOW THE SHORT SHOWN THE SHOWN THE

and the property of the proper

But the reality is that the supply addemand situation in Bangladesh is any finely balanced. There are no food applies. And destruction of supplies are coming in. The food problem is mikely to end soon. Sea water has so inundated over 1,000 square km of paddy fields, killing the standagrop and salinating the land makengituseless for immediate cultivation. The economy has been crippled for tears to come.

There are no medicines available eiter. A lot of people are now dying am water-borne diseases, from fluid ad electrolyte loss, especially since there is no saline. Maulvi Mohibullah as being buried as we got to indiver listend, another victim of it of saline. "Twenty per cent of the writing population is affected by darhoea and gastro-enteritis especially children." said Major Shamshul india of the Army Medical Corps. "We

are woefully short of medicines. Many kids are suffering from malnutrition, and more are beginning to show it. They are infested with worms."

Perhaps the grimmest aspect of the whole tragedy is the inefficiency with which aid is being disbursed. For three days there was little relief. Then supplies were airdropped, often landing in the water and disappearing without trace. Bags of bread or rice would also burst on impact, and land under water making the contents unedible and infuriating the ravaged population.

T best airdropped supplies were like a lottery. Those nearby would wade through paddy fields converging on the sacks like flies, and if lucky get some food. But only a very small proportion of the population benefited. In fact things got so bad that relief helicopters could not land because the agitated, desperately hungry locals tended to attack them.

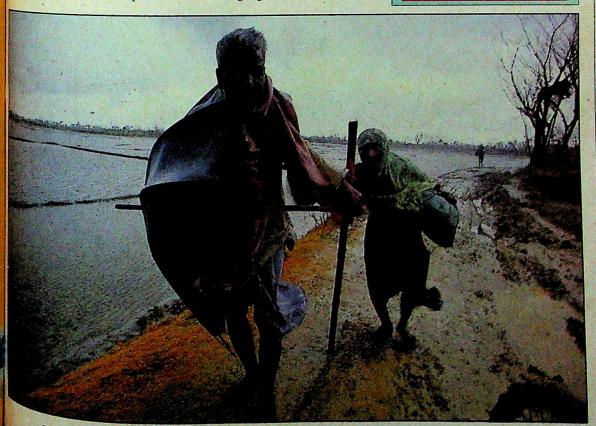
The Bangladesh administration is inefficient at the best of times, and the magnitude of the problem would test the skill of the best of administrations. But the callousness, inefficiency and chaos characterising the official relief operation borders on the criminal.

Chittagong Circuit House, the



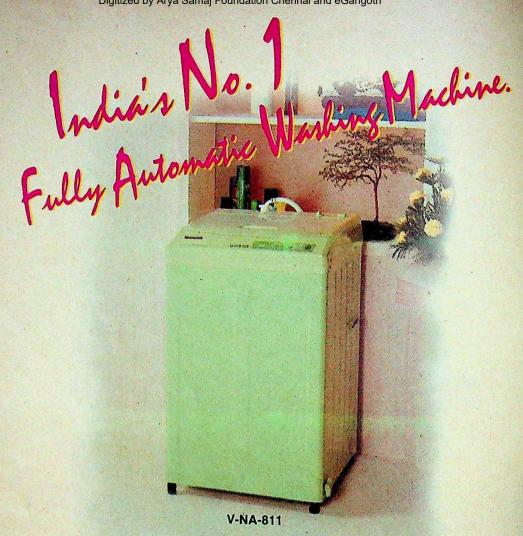
#### FATIMA BEGUM, 35

A widow, she lived with her three daughters and a son in Chunna Para village. She lost son Atauzzaman, 11, and daughter Rani, 9. "When the water suddenly swept in with such speed, we held on to the iron bars of the skylight," she recalls tearfully. "Then I saw my youngest children being washed away and I began screaming."



Two survivors brave strong winds after having lived through the initial cataclysm

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Room for the aid operation, sally has officials busy talking ther than working, seemingly indifiratto the plight of the people. When arrives after the long haul on imaged roads from Dhaka, there is an no one to receive it. All the cornment seemed interested in is eting cash aid, while material aid lies isbursed. Robin Needham, assisountry director for CARE, dipmatically observed: "The lack of amunication is severely hampering telefforts. But our people are feeling battered and overwhelmed by a quation which we feel is rapidly going at of control.

In fact, the only relief that appears be getting to the people is the relatively minimal amounts being disrbuted by non-governmental organiations and political parties like the Iwami League, Jamaat-i-Islami and ren imprisoned former president M. Ershad's Jatiya Party.

Major western donors are careful ochannel their substantial contributhrough non-governmental rganisations like CARE, rather angive it to the Bangladesh Governand which has been the target of riespread criticism.

Stung by the attack, Prime Minis-

a world minates reases operaer touch fabric deocon arranty etwork.

ctric

ter Khaleda Zia retorts: "The Government is fully aware of its responsibilities and it would provide all sorts of help to the distressed people to mitigate their sufferings." She even offered to shift her entire cabinet to Chittagong from Dhaka. But that is unlikely to solve too many problems.

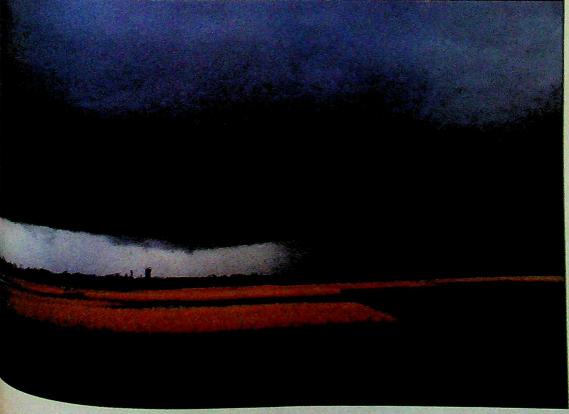
HE utilisation of the six helicopters India sent has improved the situation considerably and other Indian aircraft daily bring in several tonnes of aid. Part of the problem is that the most needy areas are inaccessible by motorised transport. The only way to get to those places is on foot. And that the officials seem disinclined to do. This means that the Government neither knows the real extent of the damage, nor do the worst affected have any realistic chance of getting the direly needed help.

Bangladesh, straddling the apex of the turbulent Bay of Bengal, will take a long time to resurrect from the tragedy. And for those who lived through the tumultuous hours when the world became a swirling mass of wind and waves can only hope and pray that nature will not punish them again like this. A prayer nature has failed to heed in the past.



#### FAZAL-UL KARIM, 26

A shop assistant from Faruha Para village, he lost just about everything. His entire family-young wife Leila Begum, and two sons, Abui Kalam, 5, Abul Salam, 3was swept away. Fazal walks aimlessly on the shore, a faraway expression on his face. He had no money, nor did he know where his next meal was going to come from.



Another cyclone builds up off Anowara, south of Chittagong

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In fact, NHB has already disbursed over Rs. 440 crores. To help provide shelter to over one lakh eighty thousand families.

Our sights are set even higher in the years to come.

On the long journey ahead that we are determined to complete.

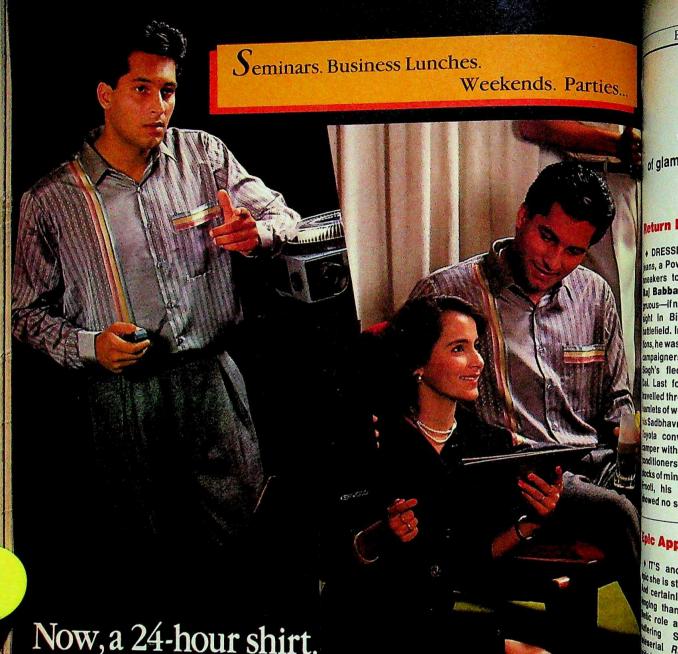


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C E L L

## POLL STX

With each successive election, the list of celebrities bringing a touch of glamour to the campaign trail seems to get longer and more varied. INDIA TODAY presents a pick of the poll stars enlivening the 1991 election trail.

#### leturn Raj

ies.

DRESSED in baggy eans, a Power T-shirt and eakers to match, actor a Babbar is an inconwous-ifnotunfamiliarohl In Bihar's election attlefield. In the last eleclos, he was one of the star ampaigners for V.P. ligh's fledgling Janata lal Last fortnight as he lavelled through the dusty mlets of western Bihar in Sadbhavna Rath, a DCM yota converted into a oper with two beds, airdilloners, toilet and kksofmineral water and oi, his fan following wed no signs of having



Babbar touring Bihar: countering Ram hysteria

diminished. Even the rhetoric has heated up. His best one-liner goes: should I ask you for votes when you have already decided to vote for us?"

That may be a debatable point but he is certainly proving effective in countering the hysterical rantings of some of the Ram Bhakts. Babbar's punch line: "Ram is being marketed as if it were a brand name, like Lux." And, on Advani's Rath Yatra, the actor intones: "If Ram were to step into this rath of steel he would probably choke." As dialogue goes, it's classic Bombay film. And its got the front-benchers cheering.

#### ipic Appeal

IT's another kind of she is starring in now. d certainly more chalging than her symparole as the silently dering Sita in terial Ramayan. Dethe being unable to speak local language, **Dipika** khalla's campaign as BJP candidate from odara is truly heroic. BJP has pulled off a by nominating her this sensitive seat. She is now going all out

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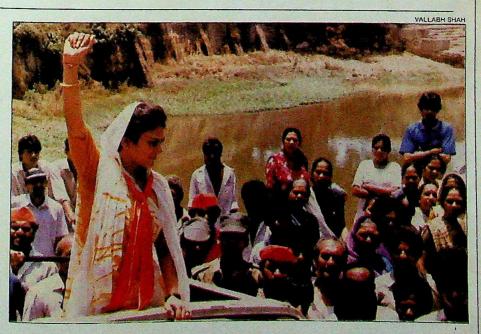
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edrify her audience in hanner quite distinct her screen persona. hi Ram, Bharat Mata la is how she begins campaign speech, a thed list raised to illus-

her new ideology. Dipika, 26, also has a clever—and Way of getting around the language problem: 'I had the engine language you hear me speaking on the language you hear me speaking you hear me you have you have you hear me you have you hear me you have you have you have you hear me you have and the ecstatic crowd roars in approval. In Padra, a 

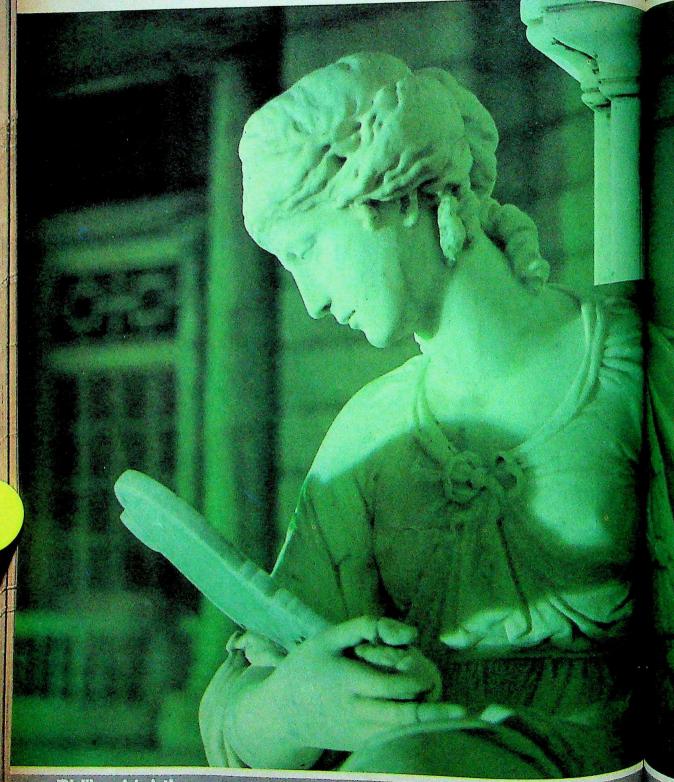


Dipika electioneering in Vadodara: heroic campaign

hours just for a real-life darshan of the tele-goddess.

Predictably, she is giving the Congress(I)'s Ranjit Singh Gaekwad, a scion of the Vadodara royal family, plenty of sleepless nights. Ram-or rather Sita-is a Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri

## AGE-OLD BEAUTY. BROUGHT TOH'



Philips Lighting



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## Philips

## Lighting

### In Action



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#### Tattle

Not that this has put a per on his patriotic ferr. He continues to work the national good—or, ter God. Explaining his

is took to work for the BJP, he says: "I joined the BJP cause it is the only disciplined party capable of curing wintry's ills." However, even that smacks of double-taker once he openly rooted for the Congress (I). Only to cout friends like H.K.L. Bhagat, he quickly justifies.



Manoj Kumar at a BJP poll meeting: unseemly show

He is still gushy about his campaigning for the BJP, which he describes as "a wonderful experience, fantastic, overwhelming". Might prove a bit too overwhelming if he

doesn't keep sharp-eyed reporters at bay.

#### ilot Brawn

Illical akhara has yet another heavyweight—
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Illy all about brawn." How well that



Alch with supporters: no muscle CC-0. Ir



Sharma; and (inset) Uma Gajapati Raju

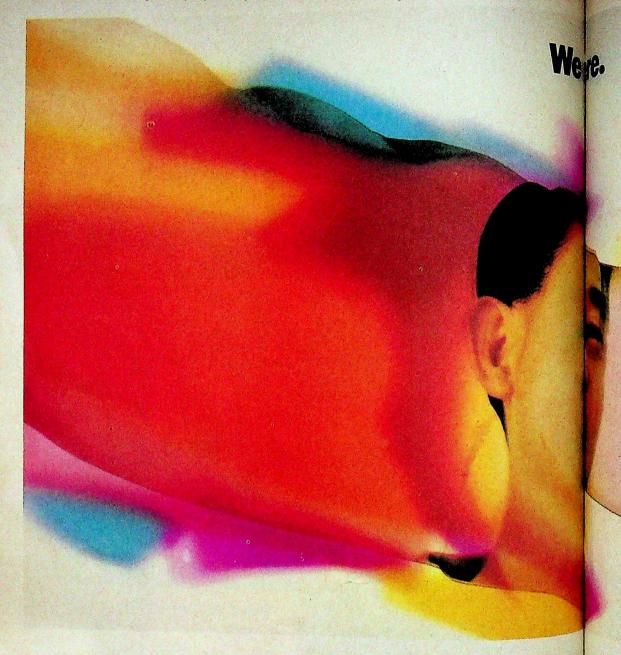
#### **Vizag Times**

♦ IT has the requisite glitz and glamour that make for an eye-catching election campaign. Film maker Ramesh Sharma, 37—of New Delhi Times fame—has turned his cinematic eye to Congress(I)'s Uma Gajapati Raju, 38. He has been actively campaigning for her from the sunny locale of Visakhapatnam, her constituency.

He has even produced a 15-minute video with catchy songs on Uma, Rajiv and Mrs Gandhi. Sharma also spends his time poring over figures of voting patterns in every polling station, and picking out areas for her to visit. Whether his efforts cut much ice with the voters is doubtful. The reason: Uma's surname, Gajapati Raju, which is the identity of the Vizianagaram zamindars, might not draw the votes this time, as it has magically done in the past, as she has divorced Anand Gajapati Raju. Moreover, she has a formidable rival in the Telugu Desam's M.V.S.S. Murthy.

Despite such odds, Sharma is trying his level best to patch together a winning formula.

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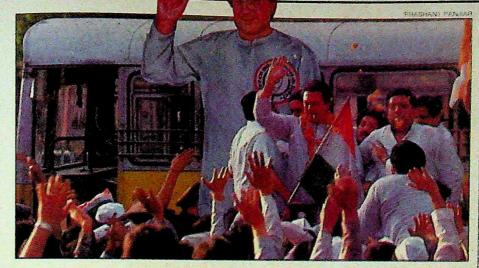
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nanna is clearly not in Amilabh Bachchan Lelectorally speaking. With Advani's saffron In the rise, Khanna is

with Advani's saffron Rajesh Khan whe rise, Khanna is the leading man in this episode. But that hasn't will be romantic hero. When a young fan asked him withis ambition to act in TV serials, Khanna cut him

t"Don't talk about acting now. This is election time."



Rajesh Khanna campaigning in New Delhi: brave front

And he is wooing his old constituency—women—with special fervour. "I have come to you and you cannot turn me away," he says. His opponents meantime refer to him as a 'kati patang', which is drifting into oblivion.



haildar Singh in Etawah: taking up trishul

#### and Ram

mital is even more potent in the current electoral with a list. The legendary Chambal dacoit, who is candidate from Jaswantnagar in Etawah, ironital sold comrades-in-arms—and much else—as laday who is taking no chances. Once so confident and now plans to be in Etawah every day.

This living from both barrels, describing Yadav as a bright had he did to the Ram bhakts in Ayodhya. The hindicales, Singh is on a roll. People jostle with Ram's path, I can defeat this Ravan (Yadav)."

#### **A Reformed Ravan**

◆ RAVAN rooting for Ram? The irony couldn't be more startling. But the BJP's candidate from Sabarkantha in Gujarat is none other than Arvind Trivedi, 53, the actor who played the role of the chief villain in the popular teleserial Ramayan.

Paradoxically, the 'ten-headed demon's' plank is the Ram temple issue in Ayodhya. He tells the voters: "Who would know better than me the fall-out of opposing Ram?"

Well, maybe his rival would. For Trivedi is pitted against the Janata Dal nominee, Rajmohan Gandhi—who also happens to be the grandson of the original Ram Rajya votary, the Mahatma himself. Said Gandhi in response to the BJP's roping in Trivedi: "Just as Ravan kidnapped Sita, they have kidnapped Ram."

But 'Ravan' remains unlazed. He carries on relentlessly spreading the message of his bete noire, Ram.



Arvind Trivedi: on Ram's side

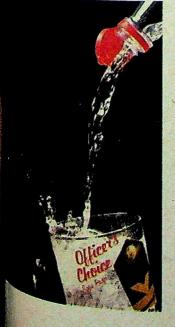
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## ISSING FEFER FOUND

Says he had no choice but to disappear. "The temptation was too much."





The ambience, the mood, the company... all the ingredients were inviting.

And add to that, the right choice. Sparkling, smooth Officer's Choice Aqua Pura.

"If I have the choice again, I would exercise it" said the Officer.

Come to think of it, who wouldn't.

Officer's Choice Agua Pura

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tion. Haridwar

#### Ahimsa Avatar

· AMID the fiery rhetoric about Mandal and mandir, everyone seems to have forgotten about Mahatma Gandhi and his ideals. But not Madan Lal, Bharatiya 62, the Awsarwadi Dal candidate from the New Delhi constituency. He, in fact, presents voters with the Mahatma incarnate. An ex-typist at Tis Hazari courts, Lal has got the Mahatma look down to the last detail—the round glass frames, the tall walking stick and the watch hung from the waist. And he's got mesmerised, audiences with people falling at his



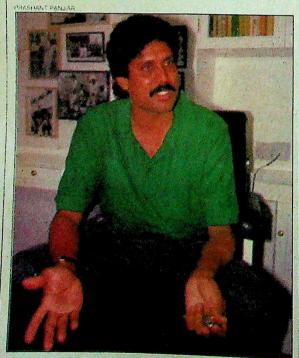
The new Gandhi wooing voters

feet and chanting Maha Gandhi zinda ho gaye,

Playing the role of B to the hilt, Madan I flanked by two suppor posing as Ram and I man—goes around ble ing all the devotees, even insists on being call M.L. Mahatma Gand Says he: "The Mahalma reborn in me to liberale country of the bro sahibs." Madan Lal stood for elections his before and lost his depo on both occasions. An with actor Rajesh Khan and BJP leader L.K. Adva in the fray, the most could do is give Ben King ley a run for his money.

#### **All-round Act**

◆ KAPIL Dev Features—in the 1991 election campaign. The Haryana hurricane will be reserving some outswingers for the election campaign. But as far as he's concerned, it's strictly a friendly match. Kapil, 32, will restrict his campaign support for M.A.K. Pataudi in Bhopal. "I'll campaign for Tiger because he is a very dear friend," was Kapil's explanation. He, however, denied he was a Youth Congress(I) member and insisted his presence is strictly a cricketer's benefit. "If I could find the time I would even canvass for Chetan Chauhan. You've got a friend. that's what life is all about." Spoken like a true all-rounder.



Kapil Dev: friend in deed



Nimmibai walking the streets

#### **Kotha Candidate**

THERE is no dearth of visitors these days to her to on New Delhi's G.B. Road, the capital's red-light area. most of those who come to visit brothel-keeper Nim 50, don't bargain for a night of pleasure. They are journalists and curious volunteers who want to know her campaign is progressing. Nimmibai is the independent candidate for the Chandni Chowk Lok Sabha seat. happens to be the country's first prostitute to stand to Lok Sabha elections.

But Nimmibai is certainly not green in the world politics. She has been actively involved in the agital allow prostitutes' children admission into schools, An the issues she is taking up this time: better facilities for prostitutes and getting their names included the census lists. Though she is certainly assured support of the 3,000 prostitutes in the area, only 70 of are registered and are registered voters. That is why she expects many voters—particularly the shopkeepers of the are come to her aid. As a wag remarked, this is one confe CC-0. In Public Domain. Gurukul Kangri Collection, Haridwar

160 INDIA TODAY . MAY 31. 1991

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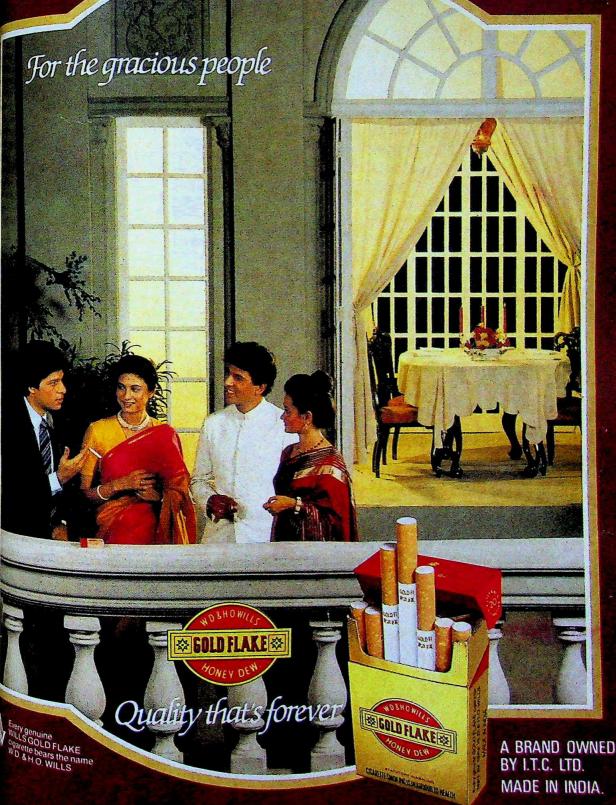
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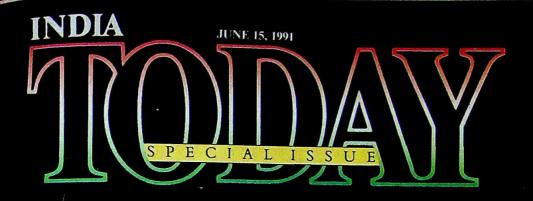
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"I am young.
I too have a dream..."



Rajiv Gandhi (1944-1991)

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## Rothmans KING SIZE



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Twas Rajiv Gandhi's classmate in Doon School but I was never his friend. We just knew each other. At school he never drew attention to himself either in the classroom o in the playing fields. In those days it mattered little whose son or grandson you were. I met him again 25 years ber when INDIA TODAY started to chronicle his spectacuor rise in politics. I was fascinated by the amazing unsformation of this shy retiring classmate of mine into menergetic, confident and charismatic leader of one of the most ungovernable countries in the world.

Imust admit that when he took office as prime minister Iwas excited by the prospect of change this augured for India. So much so that for the first time in its history, the magazine clearly declared its support for a politician. I wrote in a letter from the editor (November 30, 1984): "Although the circumstances of his elevation are tragic.

his youth, clean image and lack of a burdensome wlitical past are reasons w hope that more welcome changes will be wound the corner. He must be given a chance.' And what a chance he got with his mammoth mandate. The first year of his rule was one of the most brilling and exhilarating Thave experienced in the lest 15 years. As his sucusses mounted, his statwe grew.

I remember meeting him during those heady lays in October 1985 on

be occasion of the golden jubilee of our alma mater. He ame dressed in his school blazer smiling, relaxed, happy, fiendly and obviously lapping up the adulation bestowed whim by the school where he had earlier failed to make a on that occasion there was a photo opportunity for beclass of '60 with Rajiv. I was on the edge of the frame the photographer unable to fit me in asked me to come blue centre and kneel in front of Rajiv. No sooner did I do but than Rajiv quipped: "See, I have the press at my feet." and the class of '60 guffawed.

Those were halcyon days. A few months later it all the to turn sour. The Punjab accord floundered, the Muslim women's bill raised an uproar, the Congress(I) to routed in the Haryana elections, and the first bilings of Bosors were heard—Camelot had begun to the apart at the seams. Far from being at his feet, the htss seemed now more to be at his throat.

And as the crises kept breaking around him, he became reasingly fearful of the press. I interviewed him in April 1987 after V.P. Singh's resignation from the Union Robinet L. The was just stepping into the Bofors quagmire with his his everchanging fanciful explanations of the payoffs. I sensed in him a growing frustration about why people were refusing to believe him. The more he explained, the worse it got. From then on the press came to be regarded by him and his aides as an arch enemy. The siege mentality came to prevail amongst the inner circle. The press became the scapegoat for all his ills; contact with it became minimal; the blatant misuse of Doordarshan began; and the abortive anti-defamation bill was conceived.

T was all downhill. I felt sad that Rajiv who had shown a glimmer of hope to so many of what could be was now consumed by a venal system and had become an object of so much ridicule. Through an accident of birth and tragedy, Rajiv had leapfrogged a whole generation to be at the helm of India's affairs. In a way, it was as if my entire generation had failed. I kept thinking that such an

> incredible chance would never recur in my life-

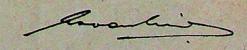
> During this period I kept bumping into him at official functions, where only greetings were exchanged, but I could not help marvelling at how good he looked and how calm despite all the calumny. I had not seen anybody who could take so much stress without showing it. His hibernation from the press continued even after the crushing electoral defeat

of 1989. And it was only after the announcement of elections in March 1991 that he started to open up once again to the press.

I had not really spoken to him since 1987, but suddenly in April-May of this year I met him as many as four times, mostly at small gatherings where he would talk about any subject anybody cared to provoke. The old friendly, frank Rajiv was slowly returning. My abiding image of him will always be my last meeting with him on May 7 while trailing his election campaign. We were sitting at a roadside chai shop in the wilds of Bihar at 10 o'clock at night where he'd made an impromptu stop. While we sipped tea a village youth began berating Rajiv on how nothing is ever done for the poor. There was Rajiv the prince stripped of his paraphernalia of power listening humbly and attentively to a pauper's woes. This was Rajiv at his best. Just being himself. A decent, concerned human being. The prince who could have been king not because of his mother, but because of himself.



Rajiv Gandhi with the class of '60 at Doon School, 1985

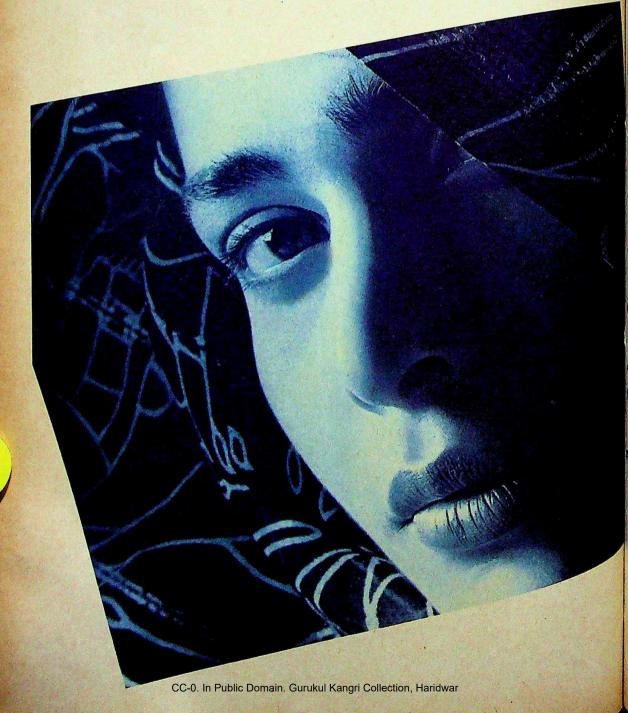


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Cover Photograph by RAGHU RAI

# Like all spies, she'd been trained to notice things the moment she entered a room.



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Nothing escaped her.

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Each tiny detail of the room was noted addited away behind those dark eyes.

Finally her gaze swept upwards
to the ceiling. And froze.

"The fans", she murmured, "who

I spoke for the first time, "I did.

picked them up the day I bought

apartment. Is there something

tong with them?"

(They were from Usha's Classic Wation—but I had to be polite.)

A hint of a smile creased her face

size timed to me, "Not at all. But may

lee a little more of your apartment?"

I wordlessly took her on a

bled tour.

(I did, of course, make a quick mental note to keep her out of the kitchen, which was an unholy mess.)

The dining room, the bedroom,

and the study were all inspected. Quickly, calmly, professionally.

(The watercolours

my grandmother had

presented me interested

her as much as the

Classics hanging from

the ceiling.)

In ten minutes
we were back where
we started from—the
drawing room.

She turned to me and smiled. "You've been passed", she said, "Mother was right. You're good enough to marry my sister". I did all I could to control a sigh of relief.



The 'Luminaire'. A fan and light combined, in velvet brown with rich gold flanges.



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The 'Kohinoor Super Deluxe'. Streamlined grace in gold and brown.

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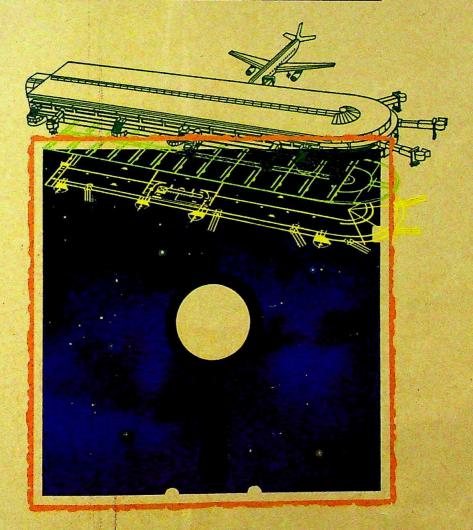
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## A WATERSHED OF UNCERTAINTY

By INDERIIT BADHWAR

NDIA is an apocalyptic society. It survives from shock to shock, each new one creating afterwaves of Lintrospection, breastbeating, despair and, sometimes, national debate. Rajiv Gandhi's death is the latest in this continuing series of shocks not only over the tragedy of a young leader being cut down in the prime of his life but also—and equally important—over the state of the nation.

The crutches of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty on which this country has hobbled from decade to decade during the last 40 years have suddenly been removed. It was the single most important prop that had served as a national symbol—whether to rally around or to oppose. It was the reference point for India's political existence. It was also the Congress Party's security blanket. Rajiv may not have been an extraordinary leader capable of grappling with India's multitudinous problems. But there is little doubt that he was the glue that held the Congress(I) together.

His passing has served to focus attention on the crisis

in centrist politics in the country. Throughout its long history of governing this country, centrist politics, as symbolised by the Congress, represented consensus, secularism, economic protectionism and unbridled state intervention aimed at ensuring distributive justice.

This system, in its nascent stages, during Nehru's stewardship of

the nation, may have appeared valid. For in a resourcestarved and uneducated country, the state was seen as the only catalyst for social and economic progress. But it began snowballing into a hydra-headed behemoth, engulfing just about every sphere of human activity in the nation. Under Mrs Gandhi's populist phase, increasing national resources-banks, for example-came under state control. And in a national network of patronage that metastasised like a cancer, national resources also became resources for the party and its political perpetuation.

Mrs Gandhi's legacy was also the introduction of a new element in Indian politics: in 1978 she combined the position of party president and prime minister in her person—a development that led to the blurring of distinctions between the Government and the party This arrangement was not only destructive of democ racy within the party but also served to put the interest of the party above those of the Government. In practical terms it meant that if the patronage interests of the party clashed with the need for effective, solution-oriented governance, the former took priority. And slogans increasingly became a substitute for performance.

It was this structure that Rajiv inherited. He headed a party that had been slowly disintegrating for the lat two decades. He tried to change the system but he was like a man thrashing about in quicksand. With his demise-because no national level grassroots leadership was able to emerge in the convenient shadow of the dynasty—there is the fear of the party totally collapsing

Political observers fear, perhaps legitimately, that this would leave a dangerous void because the Congress(I) has been the backbone of centrist politics. Butth nation's political scenario has also dramatically altered

Even though the Congress(I) has already lost it electoral hold over most of the north and has

numerical, albeit, tentative presence in the south there is no cause for de spair over a political void or the country falling apart. No doubt there will be a period of turbulence dan clot and uncertainty. But to day, there are new leader and new parties on the stage whose growth ha been a direct consequence of the decline of the

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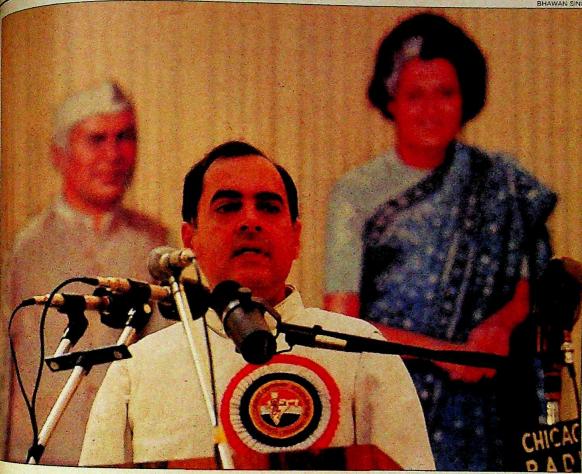
Congress(I). The difference this time is that these parties no longer draw the identities from simply being partners in anti-Congress(I) fronts but from their own programmes and the charing and the chari the charisma of their own national leaders. They at viable claimants now to portions of the political cale. They are also the products of a relatively orden with the democratic process that has worked again and again therea

notwithstanding the predictions of the doomsayers. In a hung Parliament, which may be the product the divergence of the the divergence of vote banks along new sectional regional appeals, the process of forming a government and elections of peacet in the section of the section will consist of negotiation, compromise, and concilied to service tion which are very much a part of the democratice that distance and concilied to service. And for a coalition government to rule, a central distance to the distance and concilied to service the distance and concilied the service that the service

Any party that eventually comes to power, will be faced with the immediate disadvantage of having to deal with the reality that the nation is becoming stubbornly, even defiantly, indisciplined and ungovernable.

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The altered political alities could also provide eneeded jolt to the Con-

to force major reforms in the party in order to ourage greater democratic functioning and the gence of a new grassroots leadership—as against Anual from above—to revitalise itself.

Any party that comes to power, however, will be litical cake with the immediate disadvantage of having to deal the reality that the nation is becoming stubbornly, ndeflantly, indisciplined and ungovernable because Radual destruction or politicisation of its instrualgorithment and national institutions. While overnment and national institutions. We overnment and national institutions in the Gandral do sections—like periodic ablutions in the Gandral do sections—like periodic ablutions in the Gandral do sections. do serve to cleanse and make the system more onsive, the people of this land have developed an raticethon the people of this land have used the distrust and dislike for the state and the a centris

Rajiv's death could provide the needed jolt to the Congress to institute sweeping party reforms for greater democratic functioning and the emergence of new grassroots leadership—as against coterie rule from above—to revitalise itself.

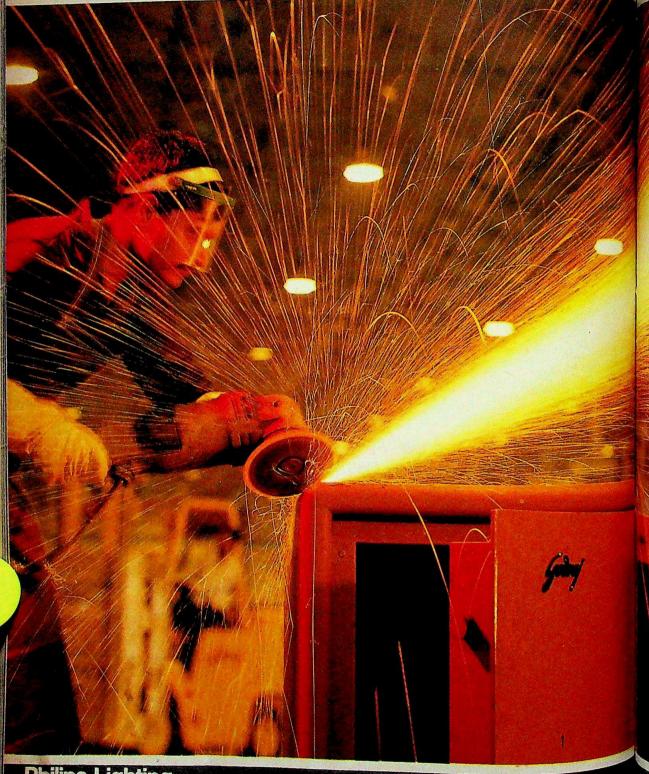
Government because of their belief that the Government promotes not their interests but those of the party in power. And people all over the country have begun taking the law into their own hands as violence spreads.

In order to lift this nation out of its morass, a major overhaul and reform of its institutions is a

critical and immediate imperative. This might even entail changing the Constitution to implement a more effective separation of powers, de-politicising the bureaucracy and judiciary, restraining the interventionist state, opening up the economy and drastically reducing the Centre's interference in state governments.

In fact Rajiv may be able to take posthumous credit for a radical break from the past for setting a bold agenda for the 90's in his party's manifesto on sweeping economic liberalisation. The need is to shape a new national consensus to make the state a more effective instrument of enforcing the rule of law, meting out justice and creating opportunities for all. Any party or leader that seizes the moment will become the beacon of the future.

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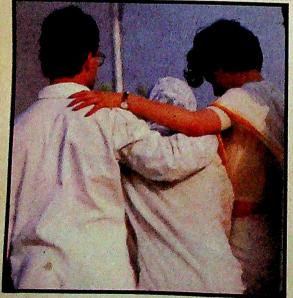
PHILIPS

### DARKNESS AT MIDLIFE

AINBOW mouth. Smiling eyes. Now, face flung downwards, lying amidst a mangled heap of bodies. A shattered wife sobbing into her dupatta. A grieving son and daughter hugging each other for comfort. Sonia, Rahul and Priyanka clinging together as the bugles sounded the last post and flames consumed the body. These were the images that remained on May 24, 1991, 5.26 p.m., as funeral flames leapt upwards searing into the nation's memory the beginning of the end of another cycle in India's timelessly churning wheel of vicissitudes. A distraught but outwardly stoic Rahul lighting his father's pyre, stepping back to clutch his mother's hand. Chants of "Rajiv Gandhi amar rahe". Heads of state. Dignitaries. Dan Quayle. Nawaz Sharif. Prince Charles. Benazir Bhutto. Friends and mourners dressed in black suits and ties, kurtas and dhoties, Frail, slumped, dressed-in-starkwhite Sonia, resting her tired face on the shoulders of her son.

A stunned nation pinching itself again and again, glued to its rv sets. Rahul loosening the strings of the white sheet that tied the body to the bier. Priyanka all grit and determination, but the anguish showing in the way she nervously tugs her hair behind her ears and gently encircles her mother in her arms. Difficult, after all, to see the fire lap up her father's body. Reaching out for her mother's arm from behind to put it around her own waist. Sonia's silent tears behind her sunglasses. The mother in her turning to Gautam Kaul, a

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA





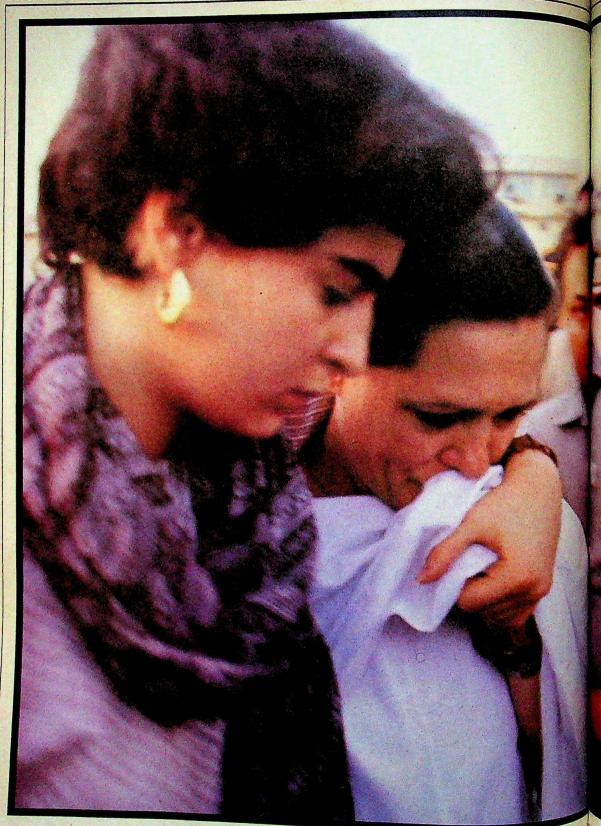
The body of the slain leader sets off on its flow Tex

The legacy of Nehru lies in a shamble

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Matured suddenly by tragedy, Priyanka consoles grief-stricken Sonia as mother and daughter return from Matured suddenly by tragedy, Priyanka consoles grief-stricken Sonia as mother and daughter return from Matured suddenly by tragedy, Priyanka consoles grief-stricken Sonia as mother and daughter return from Matured suddenly by tragedy, Priyanka consoles grief-stricken Sonia as mother and daughter return from Matured suddenly by tragedy, Priyanka consoles grief-stricken Sonia as mother and daughter return from Matured suddenly by tragedy, Priyanka consoles grief-stricken Sonia as mother and daughter return from Matured suddenly by tragedy, Priyanka consoles grief-stricken Sonia as mother and daughter return from Matured suddenly by tragedy, Priyanka consoles grief-stricken Sonia as mother and daughter return from Matured suddenly by tragedy, Priyanka consoles grief-stricken Sonia as mother and daughter return from Matured suddenly by tragedy, Priyanka consoles grief-stricken Sonia as mother and daughter return from Matured suddenly by tragedy as mother and daughter return from Matured suddenly by tragedy as mother and the priyanka consoles grief-stricken suddenly by tragedy as mother and the priyanka consoles grief-stricken suddenly by tragedy as mother and the priyanka consoles grief-stricken suddenly by tragedy as mother and the priyanka consoles grief-stricken suddenly by tragedy as mother and the priyanka consoles grief-stricken suddenly by tragedy as mother and the priyanka consoles grief-stricken suddenly by tragedy as mother and the priyanka consoles grief-stricken suddenly by tragedy as mother and the priyanka consoles grief-stricken suddenly by tragedy as mother and the priyanka consoles grief-stricken suddenly by tragedy as mother and the priyanka consoles grief-stricken suddenly by tragedy as mother and the priyanka suddenly by tragedy as mother and the priyanka

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For Sonia, who had always vehemently opposed Rajiv's entry into politics, it was like set

SHYAM TEKWAN

relative, to plead: "Please help Rahul."

Only six and a half years ago, Rahul, then 14, had sobbed while he'd watched his father perform the last rites for his grandmother's cremation. And here he was with the help of his sister, placing sandalwood logs on the pyre, pouring oil on the body that had disappeared into the logs, walking round it seven times and finally setting it aflame.

HE French-built Ecrueil helicopter, flying low over Shakti Sthal, raining rose petals, signalled the arrival of the cortege. Ironically, it was the same helicopter which used to announce Rajiv Gandhi's arrival for election meetings when people would spot it and say: "Aa gaye, aa gaye." This time a gloomy silence descended on Shakti Sthal as Sonia walked fast to keep pace with the casket resting on the shoulders of Rahul and the three service chiefs. The sun blazed down on the tricolour as birds circled the sky and the spopersonnel took positions around the samadhi.

A disbelieving nation had awakened to the news of the assassination on May 22 and sought answers to questions: Who killed him? And why? He was not even in power. There was no immediate provocation. Disbelief soon gave way to dismay and despair.

At 10, Janpath, shocked officials received the news of a bomb explosion at Rajiv Gandhi's meeting as early as 10.30 p.m., within 15 minutes of the occurrence, but the office wasn't sure of the death. Vincent George, Rajiv's secretary, informed Sonia that there had been a blast at Rajiv's meeting at Madras. Rajiv's pilot, who'd flown the campaign Kingair from Visakhapatnam to Madras, was assigned the painful duty to fly it back too. To the crew every little thing—the pen, manuals and headset—lying in the cockpit, reminded them of Rajiv who had always flown the plane.

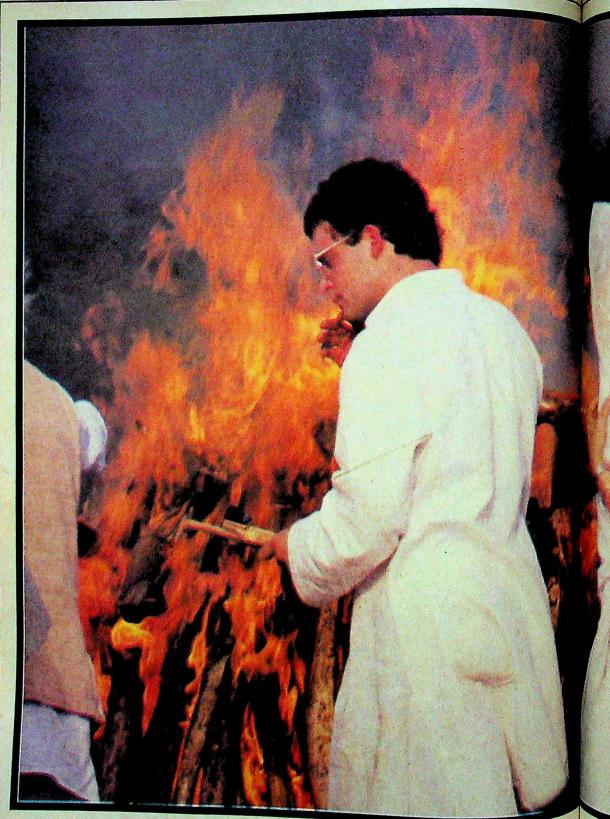
Close to midnight, George, M.L. Fotedar and Satish Sharma who'd already reached 10, Janpath, confirmed the death to a dazed Priyanka. Priyanka told Sonia. She was the

SHARAD SAXENA



n from Mande mutilated body of Rajiv Gandhi

nightmare become a reality.



Amid Vedic chants and wailing mourners, Sonia, Rahul and Priyanka conduct the last rites with good and be found to the last rites with good and be found to the last rites with good and be found to the last rites with good and be found to the last rites with good and be found to the last rites with good and the last rites with good an

The Gandhi family was very tight-knit; for Rajiv, his wife and children were all-importance



last to know-at 11.35 p.m. Priyanka immediately took charge seeing that no one entered Sonia's room. That's where she took refuge and gave in to tears, coming back outside, her swollen eyes masked by dark glasses.

Just that morning Sonia had returned from Amethi, after a gruelling campaign there and had spoken to Rajiv on the phone. He called the family each night from wherever he was halting, whatever the time. Now, Sonia immediately asked to go to Madras, to be by her husband's side who at that moment was lying under the gaze of the doctors at the General Hospital, the team struggling to suture a body that was badly mauled.

HE entry in the hospital's mortuary register reads: "No. 390-Rajeeve Gandhi, Bham expolotion, P.M. (postmortem) conducted at 1.30 a.m." Not surprising that the family was unhappy with the arrangements made. Even the doctors were amazed that the body was taken to the government hospital's morgue where the post-mortem was done late at night with just one bulb lighting up the hall.

Just as the post-mortem was being conducted, Sonia, Priyanka and R.K. Dhawan boarded the IAF plane for Madras while a riotous mob gathered outside 10, Janpath. Not sure of who had killed their leader, they shouted slogans against Chandra Shekhar, V.P. Singh and L.K. Advani. Photographers were beaten up and the President's car stoned. "Burn the BJP office," suggested one. The crowd of about 200 moved towards Ashoka Road and coming upon Ram Vilas Paswan's house, set fire to its out-house. Several MPs tried in vain to get into the Gandhis' house. Close friend Arun Singh. who had severed ties with Rajiv following the Bofors controversy, waited for half an hour but had to turn back, while his estranged wife Nina Singh spotted Satish Sharma's car and tried jumping into it, to be told by him: "I need to get in and you need to get out." The security guards were too scared to let anybody in. Only, there was little left to guard.

The body lay at the old airport terminal at Meenambakkam, where the security staff cordoned off the building as the crowd was slowly swelling. The body was brought in a make-shift coffin—a wooden packing case, which was later used to carry the security officer P.K. Gupta's body to Delhi. "We are arranging to lift the body before daybreak to avoid any complications," said a visibly moved governor.

The special IAF flight touched down at Meenambakkam at 4,20 a.m. A shattered Sonia sobbed silently as Priyanka, tears running down her cheeks, clung on to her. Sonia was met by

PRASHANT PANJIAR



dignity seeking courage in close family bond

tource of his greatest solace and joy.

long-standing friend Suman Dubey who had been walking 20 paces behind Rajiv at Sriperumbudur, when he heard what everyone else too thought was a loud cracker burst. On being told by *The New York Times*' Barbara Crossette—who was travelling in the same car as Rajiv—that it could be a bomb, he stopped in his tracks. As he describes it: "I saw, what appeared to be in slow motion, bodies and limbs flying all over the place. Then, everything looked just grey."

Dubey walked past the bodies, looking for his friend, who he hoped feverishly had reached the dais and escaped the catastrophe. Not finding him there, he looked around thinking that Rajiv had been whisked away by the security officials but was called back to the spot where Rajya Sabha member Jayanti Natarajan was leaning forward. She had by then recognised Rajiv's body from the back of his head, and the white Lotto shoes he was wearing.

The body, by now placed in a proper coffin, was taken into the plane and placed beside Sonia and Priyanka. Weeping inconsolably, Sonia placed a white garland on her husband's coffin, and cupped her mouth into her white *dupatta* as Dubey and Priyanka tried to console her. She who had cradled the bullet-riddled body of her mother-in-law in her lap.

This was to be among the last of Rajiv's campaign trips. Only one trip to Uttar Pradesh remained and just that morning Rajiv, in the cockpit of the plane, had told his pilot that they all deserved to take a holiday as they'd all worked very hard.

The first rays of dawn broke over Madras as the plane took off and Sonia closed her eyes as if deep in memory. Priyanka, till then a source of strength for her mother, hugged her father's coffin and cried. They were sitting behind a curtained area, away from the public eye that keeps one from openly venting one's grief.

Grieving also was the nation as a thick cloud of gloom descended on the country. Life ground to a standstill, even *chai* and cigarette shops downing their shutters. Fear gripped the capital as memories of the riots that followed Mrs Gandhi's assassination came rushing back. Sikhs stayed indoors, asdid others, unsure of what turn this assassination would take

The country witnessed a complete bandh as the police swept into action, making tight arrangements in their states to keep law and order under control. In parts of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, Congress(I) functionaries clashed with BJP workers and roamed the streets, tearing BJP posters and banners. Madras claimed eight deaths in the violence that broke out the day following the assassination as frenzied mobs took to the streets, damaging public property. Incensed workers attacked the office of the DMK paper, Murasoli. In Hyderabad, angry mobs set buses on fire and attacked the cinema halls and property owned by N.T. Rama Rao's family. In contrast, an eerie silence descended over Bombay, the city of Rajiv's birth. Commented a housewife "You could hear only crows throughout the day."

deathly silence gripped the people of Amethi as its people refused to believe the nightmarish news. Chabban, a truck driver of Jagdishpur, flung his datoon (twig toothbrush) and ran to the main road in search of a newspaper, repeating: "Jagdishpur bewaa ho gaya" (Jagdishpur has been widowed). People sat in clusters, wooden-faced and statue-like, uttering only two words: "Hey bhagwan, hey bhagwan."

The IAF plane carrying the body landed at Delhi at 8.40 in the morning. Sonia was not the only one crying. Tears rolled down the faces of President R. Venkataraman and his wife as the coffin was brought down from the plane. Sonia and Priyanka climbed into the ambulance as the President and the vice-president laid wreaths on the body. The airport wore a deserted look. The body had arrived almost two hours in advance and was driven straight to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences where the doctors struggled unsuccessfully to restructure his face but gave up for there was just a gaping

ORISSA

#### PRESAGING DEATH

VEN for those who swear by the mysteries of the occult and omens in this land of karmic resignation and mystic dronings, this must sound quite bizarre, and imponderably fatalistic. Almost coincidentally, Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi visited Orissa shortly before their deaths. In fact, Indira and Rajiv spent the penultimate day of their lives in the

quiet state, far from the hurlyburly of the metropolitan centres. For the Nehru-Gandhi clan, this quiescent, east Indian state with its ancient temples and picturesque beaches has definitely brought bad luck.

Rajiv was assassinated just about eight hours after he addressed an election rally at Gunpur in the tribal Koraput district of Orissa. He had stayed overnight at the state guesthouse in the state capital Bhubaneswar before hitting the day's hectic campaign trail that finally came to a bloody end at Sriperumbudur.

His mother, Indira Gandhi, too was in Orissa the night before she was shot dead by her own security guards on October 31, 1984. Just the previous evening, she had addressed a massive rally at the parade ground in Bhubaneswar, which has since been renamed Indira Gandhi Park. It was here that Mrs Gandhi spoke of what in retrospect appears to be a premonition of her own death. "Do not shed blood, shed hatred. Every drop of my blood will help in building a strong India."

Like Rajiv and like Indira, India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru had also breathed his last shortly

after a visit to the state of Orissa. Significantly, Pandit Nehru was first taken ill during his stay at Bhubaneswar in May 1964 while he was in the city to attend the AICC(1) plenary session. Nehru never quite recovered from the bout of illness and died shortly thereafter.

Such being the track record, the impression that has currently gained ground among observers across the country is that Orissa is jinxed for the Nehru-Gandhi family.

-RUBEN BANERJEE

Memo

Nehru is taken ill during his stay at Bhubaneswar in May 1964. Later he dies in New Delhi.

- Mrs Gandhi addresses a rally at Bhubaneswar on October 30, 1984. The next day in Delhi she is sprayed with bullets.
- Rajiv campaigns at Gunpur in Orissa on May 21. Eight hours later he is dead.

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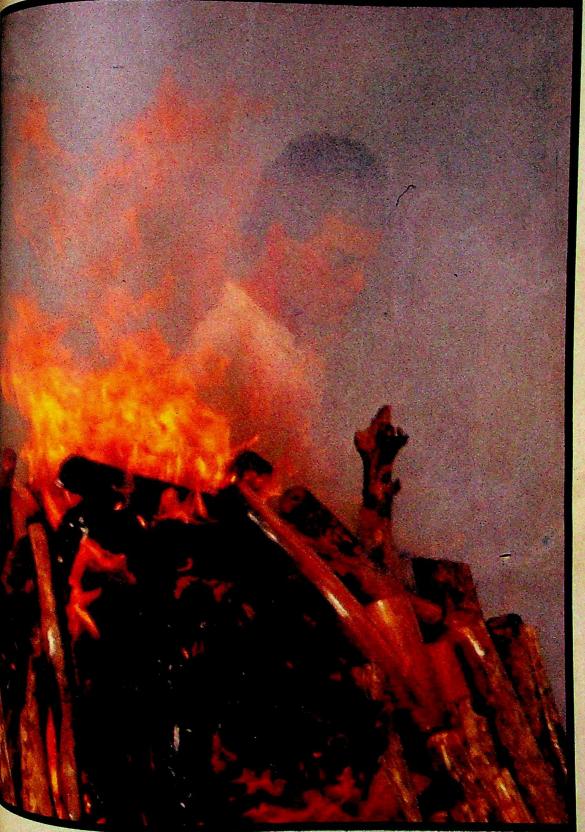
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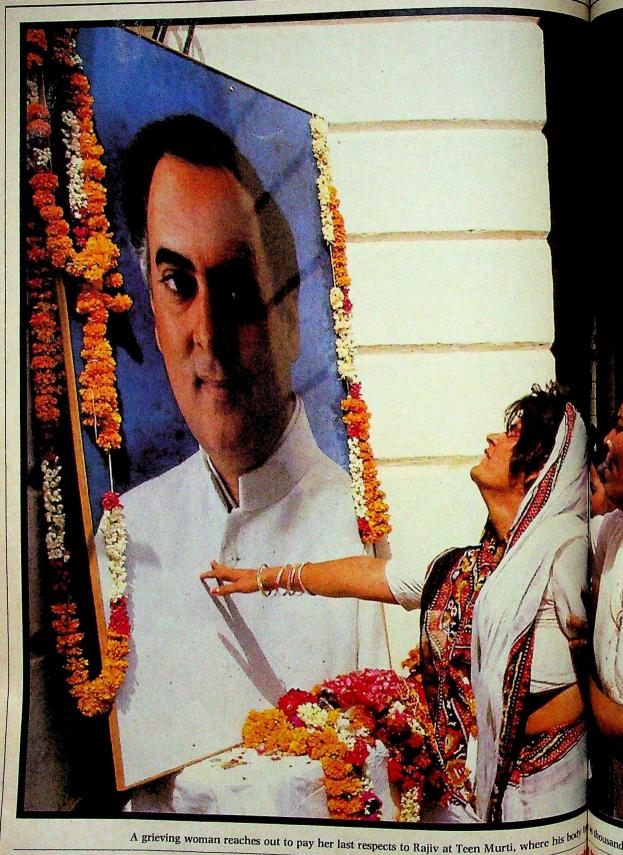
ANERJEE



Silhouetted against the funeral fire, Rahul presents a picture of tragic fortitude

Hemories of another assassination, another leader, another vacuum for a nation.

PRASHANT PANJIAR



A grieving woman reaches out to pay her last respects to Rajiv at Teen Murti, where his hoor

agicall

The outpouring of grief was spontaneous, especially for what he could have been, if

SHARAD SAXENA



hagically elusive second chance.

hole stuffed with cotton wool and bandages.

Two hours later, Rajiv was taken back home where close friends and family filed past the body showering rose petals. The ice was beginning to melt, as water dripped out from the sides, wetting the petals. A dazed Sonia, bathed and draped in a pure white sari, sat at the head, her hands nervously knotted together. Just before 1 o'clock, when the body was to be taken to Teen Murti Bhavan, where it lay in state for two days, Sonia requested that she be left alone. Dhawan politely asked the people in the room to leave and drawing the curtains closed the doors, leaving Sonia and Priyanka alone for five minutes. This was the last time that Rajiv was leaving the house.

Walking behind the pall-bearers, a lady rushed forward, reminding Sonia to wear her shoes. Looking around and not finding them she said, "doesn't matter", and walked out of the house where an attendant was waiting with her shoes. Quickly slipping into them, she looked for Priyanka and holding her hand went back into the ambulance. The previous night, while leaving for Madras, the only time she'd thought of herself was when she looked for her high-heeled shoes—she can only wear heels as her feet are arched, making it painful to walk otherwise. And now suddenly, it didn't matter if the shoes could be found or not. The ambulance left the house and a Sewa Dal woman broke down saying: "The neighbour's (Hari Krishna Shastri) dog has been wailing for the past five days. Now I know why."

Teen Murti, where Rajiv had spent most of his childhood, playing in its sprawling lawns, Sonia sat solemnly beside the body, wincing each time the sheets were lifted to insert more ice. Her hand outstretched, her pained face pleaded: "Careful. Please don't hurt him." She seemed to find peace only while sitting near the body. She seldom went home to rest, occasionally sipping cups of coffee offered by friends. "But don't get it from 10, Janpath. Wahan chullah nahin jal raha hai (The cooking fire is unlit there)," she said. The thought offood made her nauseous. She didn't eat for four long days, only forcing sips of water, lime juice and coffee down her throat. The periodic bouts of asthma that plague her returned, forcing her to take anti-histamines.

The fire didn't burn in the kitchen till after the funeral as Priyanka took charge, ensuring that the house at least did not take on a dishevelled look. She reminded many of Mrs Gandhi in the manner in which she took over responsibility, going to the airport with Amitabh Bachchan to receive Rahul and then to Shakti Sthal, to oversee preparations for the funeral.

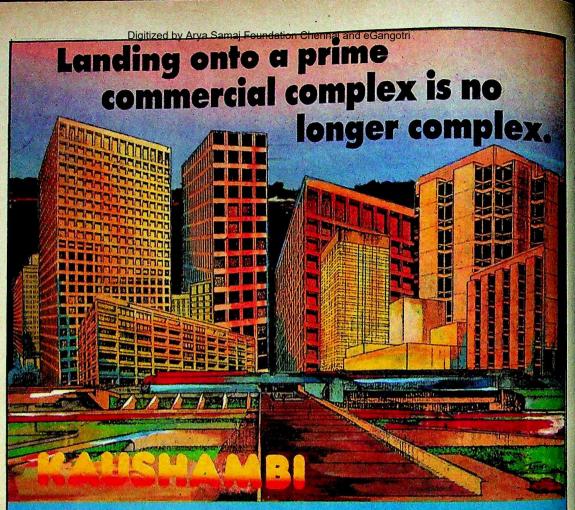
Rahul, who'd flown in from Harvard, where he is studying international politics, stayed the longest beside his father's body, sitting there even after his mother and sister had gone.

Outside the queue of mourners lengthened into the setting sun, as they waited patiently, while still others beat their chests and wept, the questions the same: Why him? He didn't deserve to go this way. A stream of VIPs alighted at the side entrance as politicians and film stars jockeyed to get upfront.

The last journey, from Teen Murti to Shakti Sthal began amidst loud wails and slogans of "Rahul, Priyanka tum mat ghabrana, Tumhara peechhe hai sara zamana" (Don't worry, Rahul, Priyanka. The whole country is standing by you). The cortege wound its way through a city still spattered with election posters of Rajiv smiling back at the procession.

Placing a tulsimala on the pyre, her last gift to her husband, Sonia and the children left Shakti Sthal, as they were virtually mobbed by the hundreds who clamoured onto the samadhi. Leaving Rajiv Gandhi to rest, a few yards away from his mother's samadhi.

-HARINDER BAWEJA with ANAND VISWANATHAN



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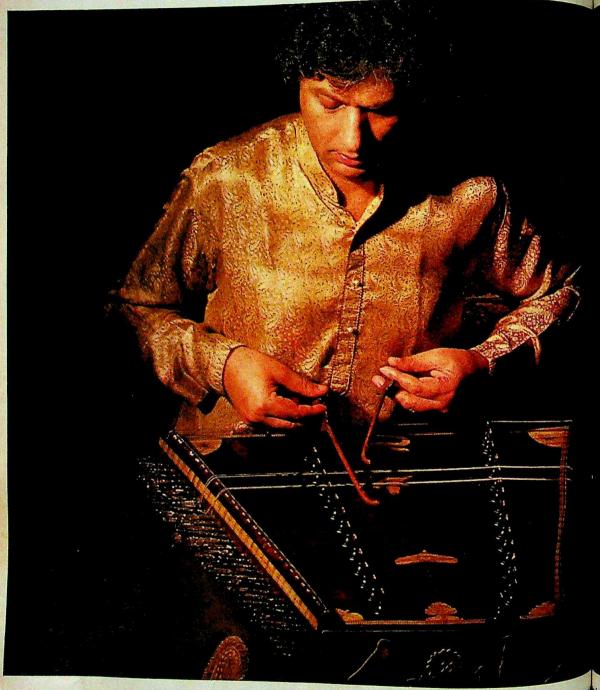


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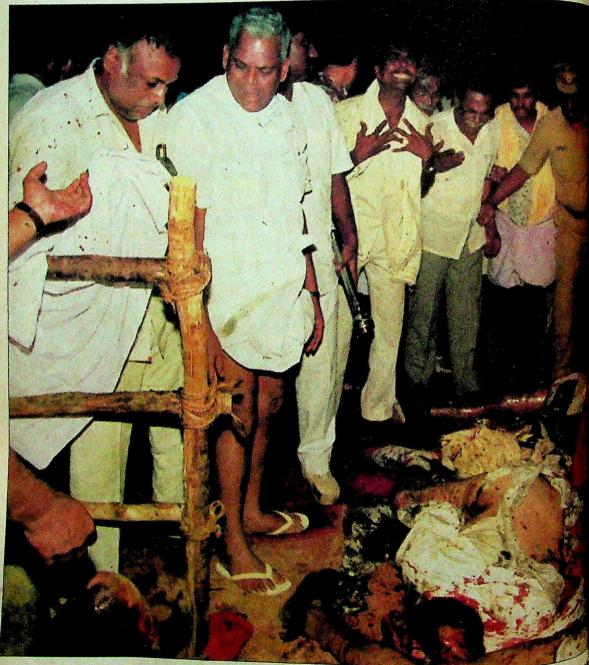


# PLANNED, PRECISE, PULVERISING

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Congress leaders G.K. Moopanar (second from left) and Jayanti Natarajan bro

Many wailed, some prayed, but for the first how

Faybody really wanted to shoot the President of the United Fayout a very hard job...the day an assassin decides to trade the for mine I will be a dead man.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy, shortly before his assassination

THE trade-off with Rajiv Gandhi's life was made the moment the last clasp on the belt was fastened. Short, stout, dark and bespectacled, the woman, somewhere in mid-30s, would have mingled indistinguishably in any election crowd but for one incongruity: she wore a and election. See Wore a worksmeez. But so many Tamil women have discarded the

M.A. PARTHASARATHY/Ananda Vikalan



they recognise Rajiv's mutilated body

<sup>ilai co</sup>nfusion reigned.

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sari for the more practical northern dress, particularly in Madras. So, a mere 50 km away, the police were not about to get unduly perturbed by the sight of a nondescript woman just because she was clad in salwar-kameez. A mere 12 hours later, with no more than two dismembered legs, a severed head, bits of a denim-and-velcro belt, fragments of a detonating switch and battery as clues, some of the country's top investigators. forensic scientists and explosives experts were struggling to piece together the rest of the jigsaw, the key to which lay in the identity of the dead assassin. Late last fortnight the police arrested Vasanthi, a Sri Lankan woman, at Cuddalore suspected to be an accomplice.

The human bomb has taken a toll this country, and indeed history, will never be able to forget. In a ghastly heap that looked like a stage act in which a score of characters somehow decided to topple backwards and lie quietly, in peace, lay spattered with blood the body of the 46-year-old, his relentless fight for his lost inheritance over so cruelly. Keeping him company in his final journey was Sub-Inspector Pradip Gupta of the Delhi Police who, only three weeks ago, had proudly told INDIA TODAY at Calcutta that he was aware that Rajiv was being careless with security but "we are careful. If something happened to Rajivji, it will only be over my dead body". There were 16 others: Mohammed Iqbal, the police superintendent of Chengleput district, and sundry Congressmen and women, their blood and entrails scattered along with the garlands they happened to be holding only moments ago. Maragatham Chandrasekhar, veteran Congress(I) leader and local candidate, too was lying unconscious. She is now in hospital recovering from neurogenic shock. Arasu Nachiappan, PA to the TNCC(I) chief, was eagerly waiting, holding the shawl he was to present to Rajiv. "I was waiting for him to reach the dais. Suddenly there was this explosion. Two big chunks of flesh fell on the shawl."

Nachiappan panicked. Screamed. Then ran. So did many others. The policemen, scores of them, disappeared for the moment, in shock and fearing there could be more explosives. Those who recovered prayed that Rajiv had perhaps crossed the danger area before the explosion. But the painfullycontorted body clad in white, the familiar but bloodied balding pate and the Lotto sneakers left no doubts that the frontrunner in the 1991 election campaign had been stopped so rudely in his tracks. On this day the gods in this temple town. the birthplace of the 11th century scholar-saint Ramanuja, were in no mood to answer any prayers. Congress(I) leaders Javanti Natarajan and G.K. Moopanar were the first to recognise him. A police officer, and then Moopanar, bent to feel for life in the body. And then froze, looking at the state it was in. "Wherever you touched it you got flesh and blood on your hands," Moopanar recalls.

Suicide attacks had been nothing new for the Sri Lankan militants and most Indian soldiers returning from the tour of duty in Sri Lanka had brought back horrifying stories: LTTE boys flinging themselves in front of vehicles with mines tied to their chests and ramming dinghies loaded with explosives into the army's boats. But that happened far away, in a different land. This, 50 km from Madras, was unimaginable. For the first half-an-hour or so, total confusion reigned on the spot. By the time the police recovered their composure, the accomplices, if any, would have had ample time to flee and hide either in the ample bosom of metropolitan Madras or to the coast and then across the Palk Straits to the safety of Jaffna. Even the driver of the car in which Rajiv had driven from Madras fled from the scene. Congress(I) leaders, including Moopanar and Jayanti Natarajan, brokedown. Rajiv's aide and friend Suman Dubey, ashen-faced yet in control of himself, was the first to Picture Courlesy: The Hindu



The alleged assassin (centre) with Kokila and Latha

recover and find out that it was all over. The body, or what remained of it, was picked up and loaded on the waiting police van which sped towards Madras. The small bands of police men routinely patrolling the streets watched in amazements the city came to life and then seemed to go crazy with ambulances and police sirens wailing incessantly and cars with red lights zipping up and down.

Avenue leading to the Rashtrapati Bhavan too were shaken rudely by the oncoming procession of VIP vehicles. Parking area was soon crawling with white Ambasadors as the nation's top bureaucrats headed for the criss management room of the Cabinet Secretariat.

At 10.50 p.m.. Union Home Secretary R.K. Bhargava came home from dinner to the incessant ringing of his phone. The caller, a Home Ministry official, informed him of the reports of the bomb blast. Exactly at the same time Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, who was in Orissa, and the Union Minister of State for Home Subodh Kant Sahay in Ranchi were informed (see interview).

illustration by AJIT NINAN and MANOUT DATE

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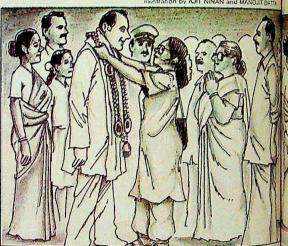
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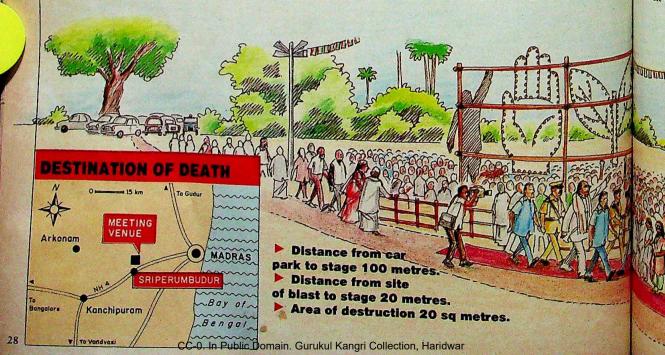
1984



Kokila hugs Rajiv while alleged assassin waits.



The alleged assassin garlanding Rajiv and then trigger belt



Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennal Around midnight when the cabinet secretary was sumdy, or what Around to Rashtrapati Bhavan, a decision was already taken to niting police the army. The control room at the Ministry for Home ds of police. Minus was manned by a joint secretary, who was instructed to azementas all the state chief secretaries individually and ask them crazy with put security forces on red alert. Delhi, which became the ly and cars the staff himself. Twenty are the staff himself. Twenty are the staff himself. of of army staff himself. Twenty army columns were deploalimnediately, backed up by an additional 25 companies of ing Brassey military forces. As reports came in suggesting an LTTE link, in too were autity was especially beefed up in the Western Extension Area sion of VIP Karol Bagh where a substantial Tamil population lives. nite Ambasor the crisis THE officials worked on a simple resolve: one failure of . Bhargava 1984, of VIP security, had been repeated. The second, of of his phone. law and order, would not be. As the capital began him of the tking up to a numbing tragedy, the reassuring drone of time Prime haktiman trucks could already be heard on the roads, with d the Union wans, rifles levelled, sobering passions. Ranchi were As dawn broke there was a flurry of activity at the CBI eadquarters located in the new Central Government Offices The suspect's reconstructed body with torso missing MANOUT DATE M.A. PARTHASARATHY/Ananda Vikatan then trigged size belt while bending to touch his feet Rajiv's body lies in a mangled heap TOUR DUDING CC-0. In Public Domain. Gurukul Kangri Collection, Haridwar JUNE 15, 1991 . INDIA TODAY



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complex next to the showpiece capital's Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. CBI Director-General Vijay Karan, a former high-profile commissioner of Delhi Police was scanning the records of available officers to handpick a team of investigators. But even as the CBI team began packing its bags for Madras, the Tamil Nadu Police, and a team of the forensic experts, led by P. Chandrasekharan, director of the Forensic Science Labora-

tory in Madras, were mopping up vital clues.

One of these lay in the stinking mortuary at the hospital in the silk town of Kancheepuram, floating grotesquely in a giant tub of formaldehyde, the foul-smelling chemical often used to preserve animal specimens kept in jars in museums. Two hefty legs, severed from the upper thigh region and a severed head. The first indications of where the bomb may have been came from a look at these lifeless pieces of flesh. And it is mainly on the basis of these indications that Chandrasekharan dispels all other theories. "She was the killer assassin carrying a belttype of device," he says pointing to tell-tale pieces of evidence:

- This is the only body left unclaimed, unidentified so far.
- This is the only body blown to pieces while none of the

#### THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

- 8.30 p.m: Rajiv lands at Madras and meets the press in an overcrowded room devoid of security.
- 9.15 p.m: Stops at Kathipara junction to garland Jawaharlal Nehru's statue.
- 9.30 p.m: Addresses a chaotic, unscheduled meeting with 100-odd people jostling him.
- 10.10 p.m: Reaches Sriperumbudur, stops to garland Indira Gandhi's statue. Suman Dubey objects to the unscheduled stop but is waved away.
- 10.20 p.m: Alights from car and takes last walk.

others have been dismembered, indicating that it bore the explosive device And the fact that no shreds of the torso have been found indicates that the bomb was carried on that region.

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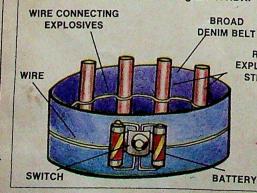
- ► The scalp has been ripped forwards by theex. plosion and hangsinfrom of the face, indicating that the explosive may have been strapped to the back
- ► Other forensic clues. pieces of belt, battery and the switch also buttress the belt-bomb theory.

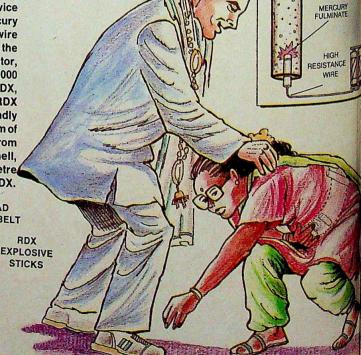
But alternative theories, including the one that the bomb could have been brought in a bouquet handed over to Rajivby another woman who may have got away seconds before the explosion, have not yet been totally discarded. There are however, two factors against this theory. One, that the police had indeed checked the bouquets with metal detectors and there is no way that one containing so many thousands of steel pellets could have got through. This has been corroborated by eyewitness K. Sulaiman, Congress(I) leader of Sriperumbudur, who was in charge of the dais arrangements. He says he himself saw bouquets being screened with hand-held metal detectors. The third possibility, of an explosive kept on the ground or hidden in a flowerpot, is negated by the nature of

Hustration by JAYANTO

#### THE DEADLY DEVICE

By adding bee's wax, powdery black RDX turns into a substance like plasticine used by children. It has to be detonated using a device consisting of a small amount of mercury explosive and a thin, high-resistance wire connected to a battery. The current turns the wire incandescent, exploding the detonator, sending shock waves of more than 10,000 metres velocity per second through RDX, exploding it. Steel pellets kneaded into RDX fly at enormous velocity and become deadly bullets. The killing power of half a kilogram of RDX used in Sripreumbudur is evident from the fact that a 25-pounder artillery shell, shrapnel from which can kill in a 200-metre radius, contains just over a kilogram of RDX.





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STICK MERCURY

HIGH ISTANCE WIRE

military forces all over world, known to be of pattery and cl. C2, C3 composiso buttress n is major constituent is a highly malleable, putty-like t the bomb mical known as RDX (Cyclotrimethylene Trinitramine). expert described it as "a little like atta, kneaded wheat ". This would facilitate moulding the charge in any form There are, thape, besides the burying of the thousands of steel pellets thecame the killing shrapnel flying at 5,000 metres per md—18,000 km per hour—under explosive impact. This is MitheClaymore effect as each pellet becomes a killer bullet. In

sindofexplosive device the killing effect is provided not by the

ision or fire but the shrapnel. Explosive used was black RDX

th differs from the yellow RDX often used by the security

nois in India. They are also trying to find out if it was a shaped

are designed to direct the maximum impact at Rajiv.

betty kind of mine, th jumps upwards dexplodes, fragments ald definitely have a found on the spot. (handrasekharan's has concluded that device contained a explosive widely may have aby demolition squads o the back.

A CRUEL IRONY

Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv's flirtation and subsequent involvement with the Tamil separatist movement in Sri Lanka has proven a fatal one. It saw the arming and training of Eelam fighters give way to an agreement with the Government of Sri Lanka which had the Indian Peace Keeping Force locked in a bloody combat with the Tamil Tigers. Friends became foes; allies, adversaries; and those trained under Mrs Gandhi's diktats became Rajiv's assassins. A similarly cruel irony had seen Mrs Gandhi devoured by the very extremist forces she had helped to unleash in Punjab.

Chandrasekharan says it was "a high explosive capable of throwing missiles in all directions".

Which is exactly what happened as the woman, if Chandrasekharan is right, bent forward on the pretext of touching Rajiv's feet and detonated the bomb by pressing the switch somewhere on her belly. The tiny, 2-mm pellets turned into thousands of killer bullets, ripping apart the top-front portions of the bodies of people in the first circle

around Rajiv. The device was rigged in such a way as to provide the maximum killing power with the minimum possible explosive as is evident from the fact that even the bamboo barricade next to the killing ground is intact. The handiwork, obviously, of someone who knows his business.

The middle of the waist-belt has been ripped apart by the explosion, though at the ends the clasps were intact. Bits of the belt were found attached to the body of the woman believed to be that of the assassin. A major portion of the orange and green salwar-kameez she was wearing was also found sticking to the belt. A senior forensic expert confirms that the team has established that the device was triggered off by a twin electrical switch—one to arm the device and activate the

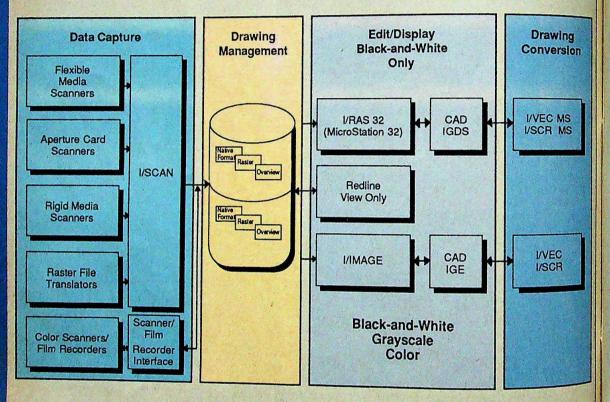
M.A. PARTHASARATHY/Ananda Vikatar



People search for relatives among the bodies flung backwards by the explosion

tople search for relative

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IT PAYS TO GO WITH A TECHNOLOGY LEADER

tized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennal and eGangotri

explosive and the other to set it off. Forensic experts are now piecing together the bits of the belt and vest worn by the suspected assassin. The electrical wiring and switches were concealed in the velcro lining of the belt. A battery cell of foreign make was also recovered at the site.

THE device was a made-to-order one and its mechanism is believed to have some resemblance to the one that killed Sri Lankan defence minister Ranjan Wijeratne in February, though that was exploded through a remotecontrolled device. "The whole thing seems to resemble the well-known LTTE tactics. We have offered all help in the investigation." Sri Lankan Government's foreign policy advisor Bradman Weerakoon said. LTTE denials are of little value and the claim that the LTTE had opened a channel of communication with Rajiv (denied by Congress(I) spokesman Pranab Mukherjee) recently is tempered by the fact that they killed TULF MP Amirthalingam within days of having visited his house for fairly amiable talks. Madras-based newsmen have often been told by the LTTE that the "Tamils will never forgive Rajiv for what he did to them". They would have had anxieties about his return. But there are still vital questions as to what the LTTE stood to gain from murdering Rajiv long after the IPKF episode had been consigned to history books. A wellorganised group of veterans of wars against two regular armies, the Tigers are hardly likely to kill India's most prominent leader merely out of pique, or old vengeance. Again, assassination of a national leader particularly one so popular in the south could be self-destructive for the LTTE. inviting a nemesis they could do without. The possibility of the assassin being someone nursing personal vengeance, probably the death of a family member in the IPKF operations, is also being looked into.

Whether or not the LITE was involved, a Sri Lanka connection of sorts is evident. On the basis of a video film of the

#### **A Brutal Blow**

THE bomb which burst at close range mauled Rajiv Gandhi's body most brutally. The top half of the fronto his body bore the brunt of the explosion, leaving his back and legs intact. All that remained of his smilling visage was the right side, a bit of the nose and the right ear.

The powerful explosion that plastered him to the ground, face downwards, broke his skull and his brain [ell out to rest on the leg of his personal security officer, P.K. Gupta who was also killed in the blast. Rajiv's liver, kidneys and intestines too were blown by the impact.

Lying in the midst of other bodies, it took his associates while to recognise him—the bald patch on his head and his white Lotto sneakers the only visible signs of the man who barely minutes earlier was being garlanded by a line of party functionaries. Confusion reigned as a stretcher was hurriedly organised and bits and pieces of the body lifted onto it, the brain dangling out of the head. The body was sutured into shape at the Government General Hospital at Madras.

At New Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences, where the body was brought soon after the special Indian Air Force plane touched down at Palam Airport, the doctors tried unsuccessfully to reconstruct his face with the help of plaster of Paris but finally left it padded with cotton-wool and bandages. After embalming, the body was covered with the tricolour and taken first to Rajiv's residence at 10, Janpath and then to Teen Murti Bhavan, where it lay in state on a bed of ice for two days before it was cremated on May 24.



"People started running. I saw the scattered bodies. Pradip Gupta was alive. He looked at us, murmured something, and passed away. As if he was waiting for someone familiar to take charge of Rajiv's body. I tried to lift his head, but only got hold of flesh and blood. It was all over. I covered him with a towel."

G.K. MOOPANAR Congress(1) Leader



"Suddenly it looked like crackers were being burst where Rajiv was. When I turned I saw people fall apart in slow motion. Hoping against hope I rushed to the dais. I was looking for white as Rajiv wears white. Most of what I saw was black, charred stuff and I kept searching. How long, I don't remember."

SUMAN DUBEY Rajiv's Aide



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"All officers just ran away." looked at the bodies, hoping not to find him. Pradip Gupta lay on his back. His eyes open, he was still breathing and looked at me. 'Are you alright?' I asked. He died within seconds. Then I saw a head lying on his knee. And I said to myself, 'Oh my God, this looks like Rajiv'."

JAYANTI NATARAJAN Congress(I) MP

36 INDIA TODAY . JUNE 15, 1991

SHYAM TEKWANI

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The spot near the stage where Rajiv was killed

hedevice packed tremendous killing power.

last moments before the explosion, the two women, S. Gokila and Latha Kannan, flanking the suspected human bomb have been identified. The two also died and are believed to have been known to the family of Maragatham Chandrasekhar whose son Vijay is married to a Sri Lankan—the family denies that it knew them. Investigators are checking on two vital bits of information: that the alleged assassin was seen at Maragatham's place and that Gokila had bought a salwar-kameez of colours similar to the one worn by the assassin a day earlier at an Egmore boutique "to gift it to a Sri Lankan friend".

BUT for the Indira Gandhi statue, painted from head to toe in garish silver of the kind seen on electricity poles, Sriperumbudur is not a stop many would even notice on the drive along National Highway 4 connecting Madras with Bangalore. It is also far from the coast and thus an unlikely hideout for the LTTE. The police say the group was active in the area and the local people remember seeing Sri Lankan refugees once in a while. Many shopkeepers say that Sri Lankans claiming to be refugees came to the town frequently, going from shop to shop asking for money. The last time the shopkeepers saw "Jaffna women" was five days before the assassination. Officials in Madras say the police are also looking into the reports that three Sri Lankan Tamil women escaped a week ago from a loosely-guarded camp at Red Hill, barely a 90-minute drive from Sriperumbudur.

Other possibilities are being considered as well. The investigators have taken note of the fact that the kind of RDX used in the explosive—black, and not yellow which is commonly used in India—has only been seen in cases involving Sikh terrorists. For example, Gobind Ram, the former sp of Gurdaspur, was blown up with a device containing black RDX. "This is an openended investigation. No one is being excluded, but the Sri Lankan Tamil groups are prime suspects," says the official. Having sorted out the initial bickering and inter-service hassles



I had just interviewed hajiv in his car. I heard the trackers in the distance. Middenly there was a pit-mikind of sound, as if something was burning reluctantly and then a big bang. Barbara Crossette (of The North York Times) and I had out and were driven had out and were driven had been riding in."

NEENA GOPAL
Sulf News Correspondent



"All of a sudden I heard a blast. There was a flame and suffocating smoke. I was thrown off balance and four bodies fell on me. I tried desperately but could not wriggle out because I was bleeding profusely. It looked like a battlefield around me, strewn with bodies and people groaning and writhing."

D. PANDIAN
UCPI's North Madras candidate



"I was to shower flowers on Rajiv. But as I got close Maragatham pushed me away. My sister Saroja was still there. Then came the loud bang. I was hit in the thighs by steel pellets. But I managed to go close to the dais and found my sister dead. I lay there till 4.30 a.m., but no one came to help."

K. SHANTA KUMARI Mahila Congress(I) Leader

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vis-a-vis the state police, the 25-member inquiry team including forensic and explosive experts has got down to serious business. They are visiting Sri Lankan Tamil refugee camps with pictures of the suspects, several people living in Maragatham Chandrasekhar's neighbourhood have been questioned and soon the Government is likely to make a formal approach to the Sri Lankan Government for cooperation.

More than anything else, the case presents an enormous challenge for the forensic scientists who, though experienced and intelligent, will be handicapped by the non-availability of the kind of facilities available in the West. If a similar incident had happened there, forensic experts by now would have been rigging up similar explosive devices and blowing them up in the face of man-sized mock-ups of Rajiv and others to test out

the various theories propounded. Techniques of tissue matching could also have helped put together bodies. Here forensic scientists have had to work on bodies which weren even kept under refrigeration simply because the mortuary Kancheepuram had no such facility. An expert likened this ASIDI investigating a 21 st century crime with 19th century facilities

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While investigators chase the leads, the tragedy will make CALL yet another lasting impression on the life of public men India. The complacent feeling, that terrorism threatenedthen only in Punjab. Kashmir, and maybe Assam, is now a thingd the past. Sriperumbudur is evidence enough that no partofibe country can now be reckoned safe from terrorism, the mos sinister growth industry in the world. —SHEKHAR GUPTA

with KAVITHA SHETTY and ANAND VISWANATHAY

SECURITY FAILURE

#### AN AVOIDABLE CALAMITY

THERE is a saying that men in charge of VVIP security quote often: "We have to be lucky every day. The assassin has to be lucky only once." Better still if the entire security machinery happens to ignore all the wellrehearsed procedures and precautions for just that very day. As, it seems, happened in Sriperumbudur (see sketch).

Some of the precautions were taken: an anti-sabotage check by Superintendent of Police Nanjil Kumaran, now lying grievously injured, a check of the bouquets and oversized garlands with hand-held metal detectors and a close ring around Rajiv. But the basic drill: securing the perimeter, regulating entry, barricading and illuminating the meeting area was forgotten. Strict regulation regarding entry onto the passage for persons carrying security-cleared passes was ignored. The price was paid by the nation.

The Government defends the security measures. "There was no laxity as is evident from the number of policemen who died in the close ring around Rajiv," asserts Tamil Nadu Governor Bhishma Narain Singh. But as in the case of Mrs Indira Gandhi's assassination, here too, if only the basic procedures provided for in the blue book on VVIP protection were followed, the tragedy could have been averted. There would still be no foolproof way of preventing a suicidal mission. But a strict regulation of entry and frisking of people allowed in close proximity of Rajiv could have minimised the risk. In this case the need for security had been ignored to such an extent that till Rajiv reached Sriperumbudur at 10 p.m. even the place for his night halt had not yet been chosen and secured. There was even a suggestion that Rajiv could spend the night at a decrepit old tourist bungalow, lying in complete disuse at Sriperumbudur.

The problem is, even Rajiv seemed to show no inclination to follow security procedures, routinely shooing away securitymen and mixing with the crowds. revelling in an almost visibly cathartic feeling of freedom after years in the commandos' captivity. Memories of his mother's brutal assassination had obviously faded with time as Rajiv had apparently convinced himself that it was the tight ring of security that was responsible for having alienated him from



Rajiv mixing openly with

This time, Rajiv had decide

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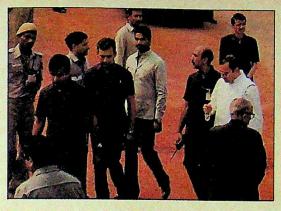
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IAR GUPTA

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As in the case of Mrs Gandhi's assassination, The security failure at Siperumbudur was a story of ignored warnings and a cavair attitude towards what bould be normal precautions fra leader whose name figthe top of so many hit ks.Infact, intelligence agen-

as can claim greater vindication in this case. The IB. which coordinates VVIP security all over the country, has kenissuing warnings to the states—in writing. Examples: An is digest titled, "Intelligence pertaining to VIP ecurity" circulated to the states last year, warned: "Sri lankan Tamil militant groups, particularly the LTTE, have a large presence in Tamil Nadu. The LTTE leadership



Rajiv: hemmed in by securitymen in the past

remains critical of the former prime minister for his role in Sri Lankan affairs."

► Other groups like EPRLF and ENDLF are also bitter.

It asked the states to beef up intelligence vis-a-vis these groups and "develop expertise in detection and disposal of various types of explosives".

Another IB directive on February 3, 1990 laid down specific procedures for Rajiv's security, including a provision for an escort car and a strict explosives check at his meetings "with technical equip-

ment and dog squads". On April 23, 1991, N.K. Singh, joint secretary (police) in the Home Ministry reiterated the need to tighten Rajiv's security. The Home Ministry also cautioned that ULFA had constituted a suicide squad. These warnings were clearly ignored. And much of the blame for that rests on the shoulders of Rajiv who, in his new, open avatar, had no time for security. -KANWAR SANDHU

SHARAD SAXENA ad revelling in a new-found feeling of freedom

to freedom ignoring repeated government warnings.

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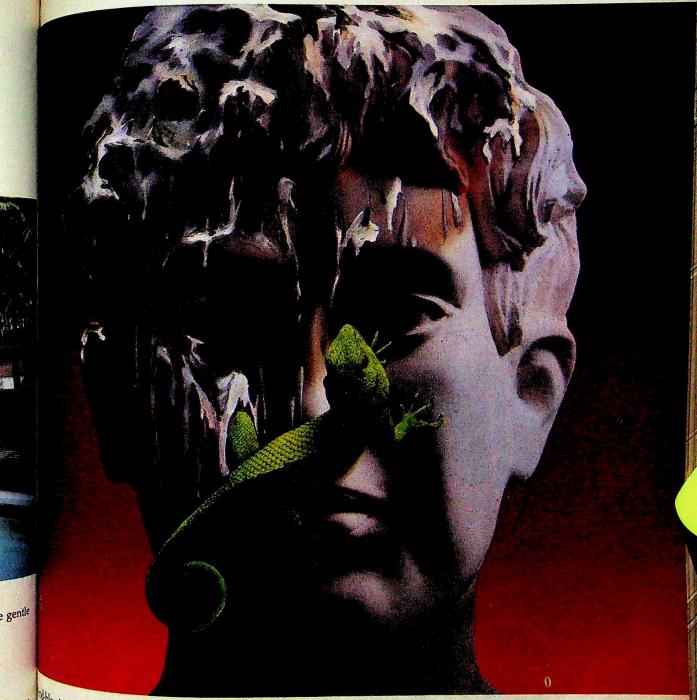
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L to R - ARUN KHADSE, STANLEY ROSE & SATISH GANAPATHY

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the people and thus from power.

Throwing all caution to the winds, Rajiv personally saw to it that the police did not come between him and the people who would line the streets. Everywhere he went, the drill was the same. He would get off his aircraft and into an open jeep, his two personal security officers in tow. The crowds. would mob the jeep, the state police would respond with lathi blows and an annoyed Rajiv would scream at them, "mat roko logon ko. aane do unko". And he would signal the people to come forward, as the cops looked on bewildered.

At first the police lining the roads leading to the public meeting would get confused. They thought Rajiv was angry that they were not being able to manage the crowds and so they'd wave their lathis menacingly at the people who'd duck and fall over each other. Incensed, Rajiv would get out of his jeep and furiously pummel the policemen with blows, then smile as the crowds would clap and cheer.

In fact, so conscious had Rajiv become of his 'mistake' losing communication with the people—that when he was not making speeches, signing autographs or waving and flinging garlands, he was pushing away policemen. He would often direct the driver to stop the jeep and refuse to move on till the policemen moved behind.

There were times when Rajiv would be without any bodyguard in the jeep, for the personal security officers were busy chasing away local policemen. And even when they were with him, both their hands were tied, trying to keep the people from mobbing Rajiv and also to prevent the jeep from overturning. Hed often send one of them to get garlands from his car, for he loved throwing them at the women and children.

E was out to charm the people and he did it at great personal risk. Accepting anything that was offered to him—bananas, oranges, grapes, sweets, chocolates, peanuts, soft drinks and cups of tea. He was repeatedly asked if he wasn't taking undue risks. He replied: "I can't distrust the common man. How long can I keep worrying about these things? I have to live life."

The disdain for security was what stood out most starkly in his 1991 campaign. The media too was noticing and mentioning it, and word had gone around that Rajiv was vulnerable. Worse, there was no secret as far as his travel schedule was concerned. One call to the Congress(I) officein New Delhi or in the state he happened to be visiting and one could get his itinerary in complete detail. There could not be a clearer invitation to trouble.

The security agencies were worried and the subject had come up repeatedly at the IB's review meetings. Consequently the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Subodh Kant Sahay (see interview) and Prime Minister Chandra

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Shekhar had both written to THE CRUCIAL LAPSES Diagram by B.K. SHARMA To Kanchipuram/ Bangalore NO BARRICADE BEHIND THE DAIS NO METAL DETECTORS INDIRA GANDHI'S STATUE SPACE FOR GENERAL PUBLIC unouncing To Sriperum: budur Town Madras - Sriperumbudur Road NO EXPLOSIVE CHECK WITH NO PROTECTIVE SNIFFER DOGS RING OF POLICEMEN UNPROTECTED GROUND PERIPHERY Sriperumbudur lacked even the basic elements of security that are prescribed in the Home Ministry's "blue book" on VIP security such as, regulated entry, barricades and illumination of the meeting ground.

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him, cautioning him about security. The latest of these letters had been written on May 18, following the attack on Sajjan Kumar, the Congress(I)'s candidate for the Outer Delhi constituency who happens to be on the Sikh militants' hit list. Even the director of the IB called on him to warn him. But he ignored them all.

As a matter of fact at a general's daughter's wedding in the capital he chided the Union home secretary for "prompting" the ministers to write these letters. Sources in the Home Ministry also say that under pressure from Rajiv and the Congress(I) the Uttar Pradesh Government had had to transfer some police officers simply because they had

irritated the leader by being sticklers for security. Soon. it seems, even the securitymen were convinced that there was very little they could do to change Rajiv's new resolve for freedom of action. As a senior official said: "Security concerns follow from top to bottom. Once the ward himself becomes lax the protectors obviously follow suit."

There will obviously be a witch-hunt of sorts following the tragedy and the commission of inquiry headed by Justice J.S. Verma of the Supreme Court will go into the question of security failure. But a vital question raised by the tragedy is should a public person, whose security is vital for the nation, be allowed to have the final say on security arrangements for

SUBODH KANT SAHAY

## "RAJIV HAD BEEN WARNED OFTEN"

UNION Minister of State for Home Affairs Subodh Kant Sahay, 40, was in Ranchi when he first heard the news of the assassination at 10.50 p.m. Since then it has been an unceasing flurry of activity for him and his ministry. Sahay spoke to Features Editor SHEKHAR GUPTA about the state of the investigation and the law and order situation following the tragedy. Excerpts:

Q. Was there much confusion after you got the news?

A. There was shock. But from the very beginning one thing was very clear. We knew what was

going to happen and what should be done. While the prime minister was informed in Bholeswar, the cabinet secretary and the 1B director immediately apprised the President of the situation. By 11.16 p.m., when the tragic news was announced on Doordarshan, flashes had gone to all state governments to ensure that violence did not break out. Mr Seshan was called to the Rashtrapati Bhavan at 2 a.m., as we had to quickly decide about the remaining rounds of the poll.

Q. Were you worried that the Sikh militants could be involved in the assassination?

A. Anything was possible. But we were prepared. On November 1, 1984, Chandra Shekhar and I took part in a peace march through Delhi's riot-torn Bhogal and people wanted to lynch us. That was not going to be repeated. So the prime minister sent out firm signals to the officials that negligence won't be tolerated. Our firmness was reflected in the administration's performance.

Q. Were you aware of the threat to Rajiv?

A. In fact, on May 18, following the attack in Delhi on Sajjan Kumar, we had reviewed the security for Rajiv. Even earlier there were frequent in reviews. The officials were complaining that Rajiv himself was defying security precautions. I myself wrote to caution him. But there was no response from him.

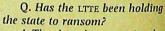
Q. Was there a security lapse?

A. We want to go deep into this and that is why we have set up a commission of inquiry. The woman, if we go by the suicide (squad) theory, was not security-cleared to go on to the passage. But perhaps she took advantage of being a woman and got in.

Q. Do you think the LTTE was responsible?

A. Whether it has been

A. Whether it has been done directly by the LITE or not, it is a result of the element of violence brought in by the LITE into Tamil Nadu. They have routinely brought arms for factional fights. We have seized scores of wireless sets from their boats and even from the mainland. It is high time we cracked down and completely cleared the area.



A. They have been running the state. Can there be a bigger shame?

Q. But haven't successive governments been patronising the LITE?

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A. That is an unfortunate part of Indian politics. Weak political leaderships patronise violent movements. The AGP-ULFA link in Assam is a case in point. The same happened with the LITE. Our leaders create Bhasmasurs, not realising that they are not Lord Shiva and it's the demon that will devour them. In Tamil Nadu the LITE were worshipped and helped like anything. What have we got? Dead officers, jawans, loss of goodwill and now the loss of a leader

Q. Was the DMK involved with the LTTE?

A. Well, there were two occasions on which Mufti (Mohammed Sayeed), as home minister, wanted to visit Tamil Nadu to see things for himself. Each time he was stopped by Karunanidhi who threatened to resign. Once it was V.P. Singh who stopped him just as he was boarding the flight. We have been wanting to go to the coastal areas to look at the refugee camps which were funded by the Centre. But we were not allowed.

Q. How's the overall law and order situation in the country?

A. It is under control. There are no killings in Assam. Many groups have joined the mainstream in Punjab while many others are determined to oppose the elections. But I sometimes wonder, how much death have I seen in the past year. Kyamurde ginte-ginte hee jawani nikal jayegi? (Will my youth pass counting the dead?)



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PROFILE



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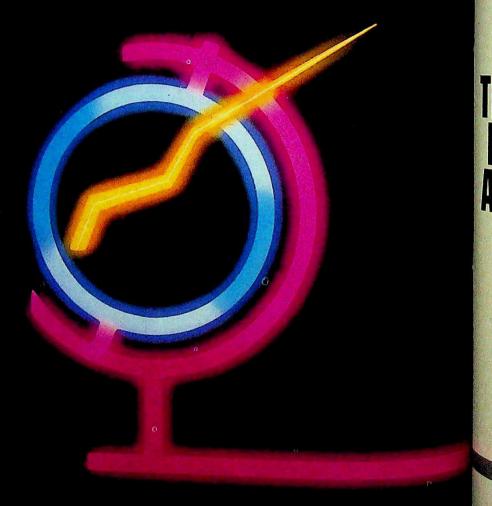


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himself, a right Rajiv usurped unchallenged. This was one of the questions debated by the top officials and cabinet members and the answer, at least for the future, is a firm no.

In all the high-level reviews of VVIP security following the assassination there also seems to be a realisation that in the era of simple but deadly home-made explosive devices and suicide squads no security can ever be fool-proof leaving deterrent retaliation to be the only answer. "We should

retaliate wherever. In any part of the globe. Once we know who has done it our response should be such that people will think 20,000 times before taking a shot at a politician, "says Union Commerce and Law Minister Subramanian Swamy, reflecting the Cabinet's view. An unfortunate sign of the times when a democracy, held to terror's ransom, beginsto think of answering back with terror. -SHEKHAR GUPTA

with HARINDER BAWEJA and ANAND VISWANATHAN

TAMIL NADU

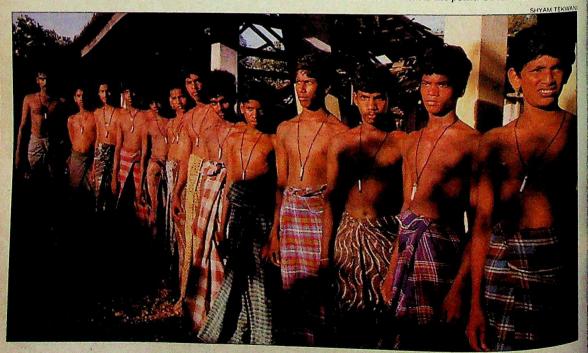
## UNDER THE TIGERS' SWAY

THE moment the first mention of an LITE connection in the assassination came up there was no dearth of "I-told-you-sos" in Madras. Many top officials. in the police as well as the bureaucracy, were saying openly that the way the LITE 's intransigence was growing, a major tragedy was only to be expected. There was also a sense of helplessness. Not just because the organisation has been using Tamil Nadu as a base for waging its war against Colombo but because the state has, through the years, silently patronised the organisation as it grew into a Frankenstein. Top officials confess that such is the sway of the Tigers that it will be difficult for any police force to bring them to book for any crime.

It is well known that both M. Karunanidhi and the late MGR, the two giants of state politics in the last decade, have

gone out of their way to help the LTTE. Partly it is because of the fraternal sympathy for the linguistic and ethnic cousins. Partly it is also because the LTTE has become a populistic cause which no group seeking votes can ignore in Tamil Nadu. The result is a virtual abdication of authority by the state to the LITE particularly in the coastal areas.

The Tigers run their own communication network, a virtual government in the camps and openly defy all customs and immigration laws. Their boats ply freely between India and Sri Lanka. The customs and the police are either too ill-equipped to fight them, or unwilling, so thoroughly in control are the Tigers of the levers of political and bureaucratic power in the state. Even under President's Rule many top officials confess they are unwilling to act. As a senior official said: "What is the point? Soon there will be an



A line-up of LTTE men carrying cyanide capsules round their necks

Both the DMK and the AIADMK have patronised the LTTE for political ends.

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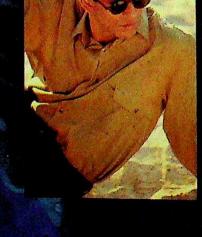
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# GETTING AWAY WITH MURDER

EVER since militant Sri Lankan Tamil groups made Tamil Nadu their base many instances of violence have rocked the state. Inmost of the cases investigation has made little progress and even in cases when suspects have been arrested they have been allowed out on bail.

Madras airport blast, August 2, 1984: The Tamil Eelam Army (TEA), a small militant group, was found responsible for the incident in which 30 persons were killed and 37 were injured. TEA leader Thambipillai Maheswaran was arrested on a nonbailable warrant, but he jumped bail along with another accused.

Rockfort Express blast, March 15, 1987: The Madras-Trichy Rockfort Express capsized over a blown-up rail bridge, killing 25 persons and injuring 139. Though the extremist Tamil Nadu Viduthalai Padai (Tamil Nadu Liberation Troops) claimed responsibility, it is believed that Maheswaran provided the expertise.

Explosives Factory Detected, January 17,



Coffins of EPRLF leaders slain in Madras

#### The militants have blatantly defied all law.

**1986:** Six PLOTE men held for running an explosives factory in Madras city.

Killing of EPRLF leader Padmanabha and colleagues, June 19, 1990: The LTTE men had killed Padmanabha, the leader of the ERPLF and 19 of his colleagues. The LTTE's close relation with the Karunanidhi government prevented the possibility of any pre-emptive action.

deted government and most probably it will be pro-LTTE.
You could then be victimised merely for doing your job."

Soon after the Tamil separatist movement in Sri Lanka plintered in 1981-82, most groups moved to Tamil Nadu. If mitial militant activity was low-key, it gathered momentum after the July 1983 massacres in Sri Lanka. With the refugees came young inspired guerrillas, who with the connivance of the state and the Centre soon turned the state into a militants' base. On MGR's death, the Tigers who had hitherto toccived his support, also gained Karunanidhi's backing.

HE DMK government has bailed the LTTE out of trouble on many occasions. On August 14, 1990, four office assistants of the state Public Department speed bail papers in a criminal case (MP 2784 of 1990) for the suspected LTTE militants arrested on the Tanjavur coast beystaged a five-hour sit-in-drama in their Maruti van and the state of talk to anybody other than Chief Minister applies if force was used, while officials and a company of Two of the

Two of the government servants who signed the bail—size of the government of the government

Thember V. Gopalasamy.

It was a bloody mess-up, "admits Gopalasamy. Accordate had asked one of his aides to organise bail and turn got the ministers' personal staff to sign the bail

papers without the knowledge of the ministers. Those who signed were later suspended after an inquiry but continued to work till the government was dismissed.

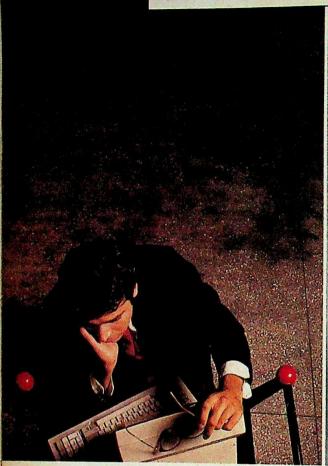
After Chandra Shekhar became prime minister and as pressure mounted on the DMK—Admiral L. Ramdas had revealed in Madras that the state Government had let off 100 Tigers apprehended by the Navy—the Government apprehended 86 Tigers and 100 other militants.

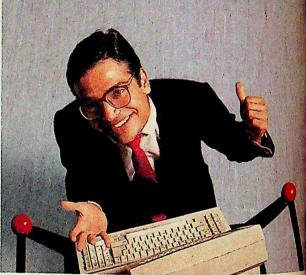
Support for the LTTE comes from other areas as well. The nursing homes in Trichy and Tanjavur are favourite haunts of the Tigers as they bring in for treatment their comrades wounded in battle. The whole exercise of taking them from the Tamil coast to treating them to their safe return to Jaffina is mostly coordinated by Gopalasamy. According to him he has been helping the wounded Tigers because they are facing tough times. "I have been doing everything in my capacity and beyond to help them," he says, quoting the Geneva convention which allows the treatment of wounded soldiers in enemy territory.

Chief Secretary T.V. Antony says that 100 militants have been rounded up in the past two months and Governor Bhishma Narain Singh says that the tragedy will "definitely lead to an intensification in the drive against the menace of LITE". Already, the state Congress(I) chief V. Ramamurthy has called for the expulsion of all Sri Lankan Tamils, and even Jayalalitha has made threatening noises. But the DMK has already given indications that it plans to build the LITE into a major election plank. "It is sheer hypocrisy that the Congress(I) accuses the LITE of the murder months after Rajiv met its representatives," says M. Karunanidhi. However, given the widespread revulsion against the assassination the LITE could, for once, find the dice loaded against it in its favourite sanctuary.

—ANAND VISWANATHAN

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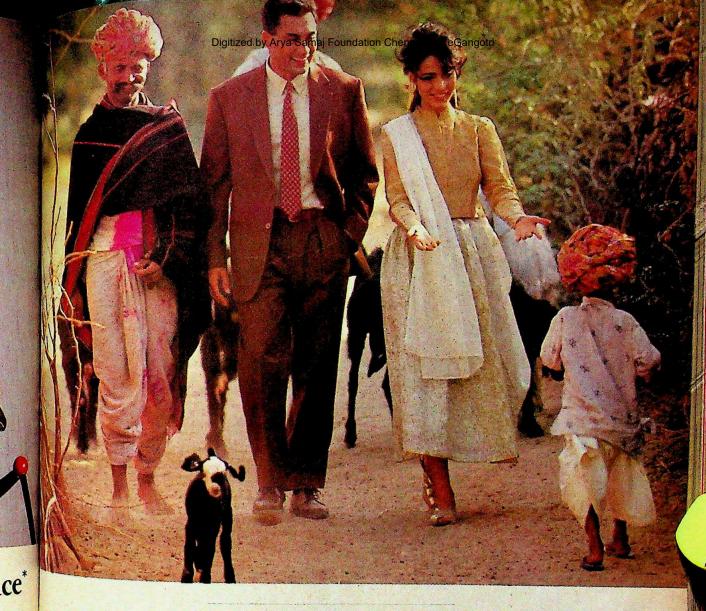
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# THE ELUSIVE SPARK

Pandle Nehru slept, finally, in those lovely, dark and deep woods perhaps tortured till the very end by the thought that he still had miles to go. His grandson never expressed the yearnings of his innermost being in poetry and Robert Frost was perhaps as far from his mind as an inland desert from an ocean. But in his own, prosaic way Rajiv Gandhi always talked about that "second chance". He lived in the belief that opportunity knocks

twice. It was his deterministic faith that there would be a second coming of Rajiv Gandhi. Hadn't there been for his mother? For his brother, Sanjay? He had accepted, ultimately, the mantle of the eternal politician because he believed that biology and destiny had conspired to perpetuate his leadership.

We Shall Return, he had confidently predicted, within days after his party's humiliating defeat in 1989. It was a mantra he would often repeat among friends and politicians close to him. Yes, We Made Many Mis-

takes, he would admit easily. There's unfinished business to be taken care of. The ascendancy of non-Congress(I) governments, he believed, was perhaps even a necessary phase in which the people of India would learn the futility of voting in groups which had nothing more to offer than mere anti-Congressism. In contrast, Rajiv's first tenure would resemble a golden age.

By this calculation—whether fatalistic or scientific—Rajiv and his party should have been poised for a triumphant majority in the elections now under way. The opening shotfor the Second Chance to get on with unfinished business. But with the first round of electioneering over and just before Rajiv's assassination, the party appeared to be falling short of even a working majority.

Rajiv's magic—that electrifying phenomenon of 1985—had failed him. He was like the fairy-tale wizard shorn of his powers. The voters appeared to be

grudging him his coveted second chance. His unfinished business had become his own private agenda. The voters neither sensed its meaning nor its psychic thrust. His party's stability slogan dulled the brainwaves rather than excite them into expectations of a new dawning of progress and prosperity.

And the reasons are not far to seek. In assessing Rajiv's legacy and his impact on the Government and nation, the metaphor that springs rapidly to the

mind is that of a brilliant little spark that just failed to explode into an incandescent flash of energy. The last five years—how distant they already seem—appear like the dark cloud behind the silver lining.

Con

The all-encompassing reality may well have been the dark cloud. But the hope—the indefinable quest—for the people who believed in him always remained the memory of the iridescence of that silver lining. It must have been, too, for Rajiv. When it had flashed into the public consciousness during

those all-too-brief early years its message had been potent and clear. The Congress party, its vested interests, its patronage network, its sycophants and office-seekers, had become a monstrous impediment to India's progress. His solution lay in the denial and destruction of this debilitating ethos.

He tried, and then gave up. Perhaps because he did not have a clear idea of what to replace the system with. And he may have lived in the private hell of a man who knows what must be done but fails to heed the call of his decent instincts. During his last days on the campaign trail, even though he would not admit o any feeling of deep remorse, he talked openly about his failures, about how he would do things differently, about how he now understood the system better. He was looking for that second chance, to go back to that silver lining. Perhaps he had learned something in his stay in the wilderness. We shall never know.

—INDERJIT BADHWAR



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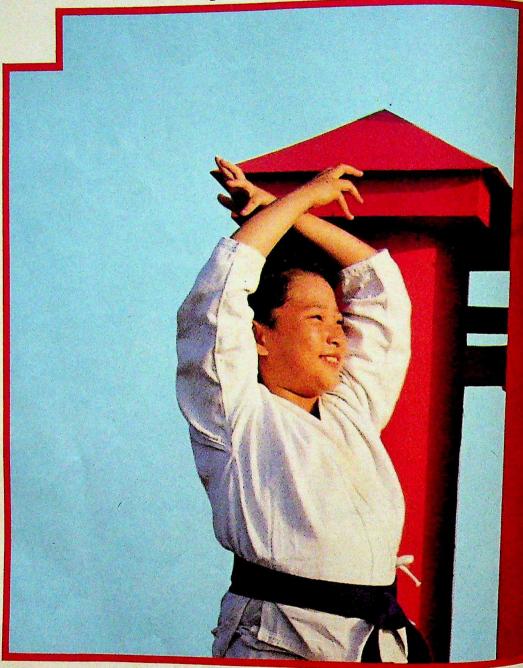
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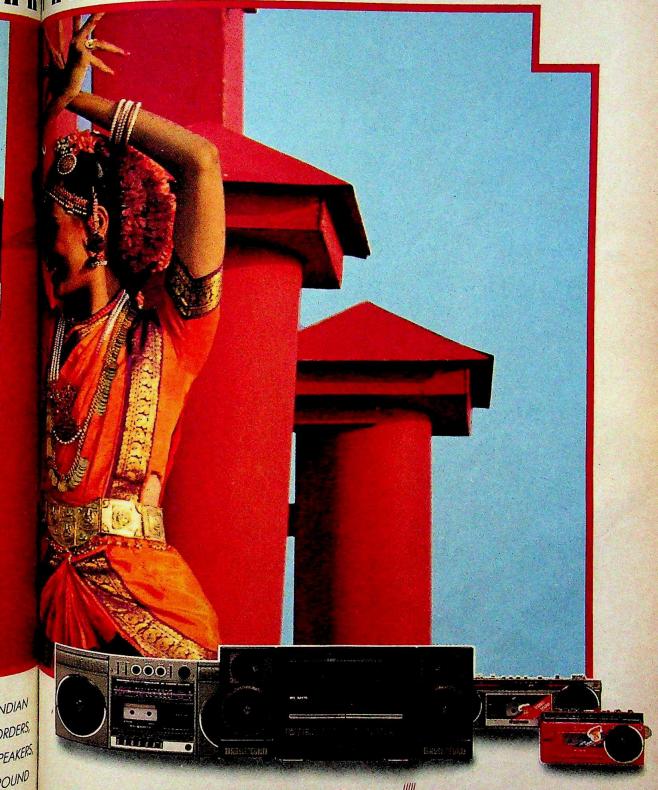
# JHANAK JHANARAA



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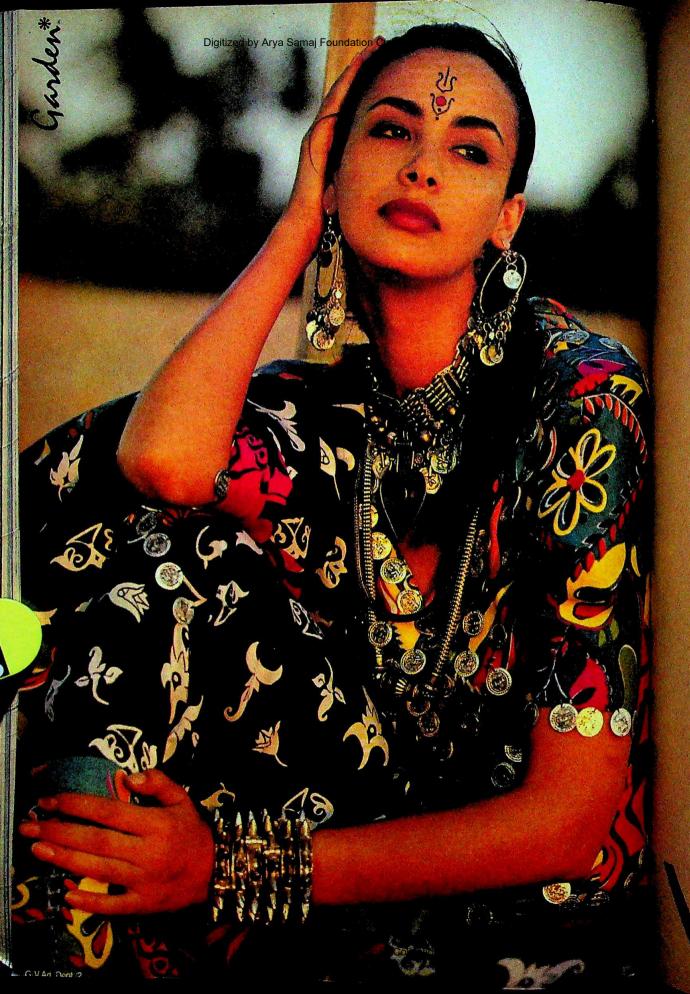
# AMAAYAL BAAJE



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# ORDEAL OF PRINCE CHARMING

have a dream," he said then, in that summer of '85. And we, too. dreamed with him. It was truly an Indian summer then, that summer of Rally Gandhi, No leader since Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had brought with him such brightness and hope. Or such a believable vision of 21st century India. It was not just his age. Or the attractiveness of his personality. Nor even-his pedigree. There was, then. a special radiance ac-

Inducted into the party, Rajiv at the feet of the political master.

sibility. Out of tragedy, had emerged lustre and light.

That was then, when the world was his appreciative stage and the applause a genuine acknowledgement of a leader who promised both excitement and glamour. And, above all, change. That all that changed in the blink of history's eye was

a tragedy made greater by his promise and his prestige. Somewhere along that lonely road, the dream died. And we all died, a little.

companying him, a kar-

mic configuration that

had led him to this mo-

ment of awesome respon-

History is the harshest of judges. When all the eulogies are over and his ashes borne aloft on the leaden wings of India's holy rivers, it may not judge him too well. In the sum total of his young life as leader of the world's most populous democracy, the good will oft be interred. Then only his failures will return, ghostlike, to haunt the memory of a man who could have been king.

### A private family man flung into the spotlight.

loss. Not for what he had become but because of what he symbolised. In the psyche of the subcontinent, dynasties are

the most durable and acceptable. In his case, the emotional osmosis was further fuelled by the fact that his family-one sirgle family—had ruled the country for virtually 37 d its 44 freedom years.

That there was much

in him that was good and

honourable and decent

there can be no doubt

That was, indeed, the spe-

cial quality which en-

deared him to millions of

his people. Few leaders are

blessed with charm and

charisma. He had both.

That, and the freshness symbolised by a genera-

tional change in India's discredited leadership and

the debut of a new politi-

much. Perhaps we hoped

too much. Like drowning

Perhaps we saw too

cal culture.

Rajiv's unique public attraction was his image as the reluctant prince An intensely private faur ily man, a happy aviator sucked greedily into the quicksand of Indian poli tics to fill the void left by the natural heir, his brother Sanjay. "Some one has to help Mummi was his justification then That it wears a hollon ring now is an indication

men clutching at imagistraws. grabbed him, worshipped him, set him on an impossibly high pedestal. And then, finally, violently, consumed him. With him, perhaps, dies a dynasty. For India, it is a trage

RAGHU RAI

#### **RAJIV THE RELUCTANT**

- I don't know much about politics. The way I see it is that Mummy has to be helped somehow.
- She (Sonia) is dead against my getting into politics.
- People's expectations are scary.
- My greatest disadvantage is that people are always comparing me to my grandfather and my mother.

RAGHU RAI

was much good and nd decent no doubt ed, the spevhich enmillions of leadersare harm and had both. freshness a generain India's ershipand new politi-

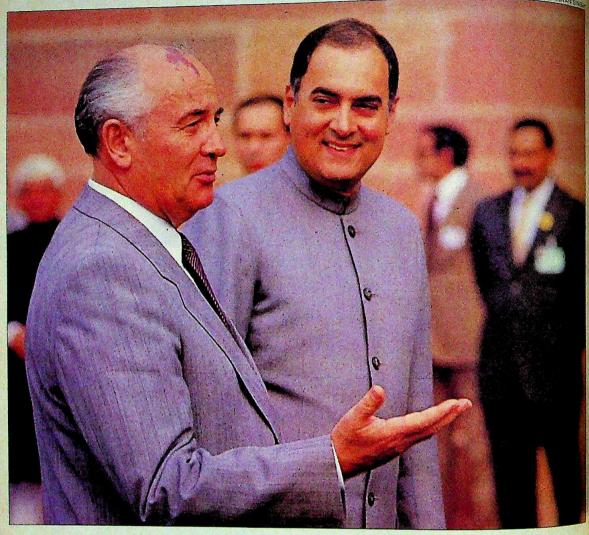
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is a tragic of what he nasties are able—and is case, the nosis was by the fact one sin d ruled the ually 37 d years. que public his image nt prince ivate fant py aviator y into the

idian polioid left by heir, his y. "Some Mummy. ation then a hollon indication

Appointed as general secretary of the Congress(I), Rajiv sheds his aviator outfit for a Gandhi cap.

in politics gradually becomes a willing captive of the traditional durbar system.



With Mikhail Gorbachev, striking an instant rapport and making his mark on the international stage.

#### He was most comfortable on his foreign forays, his natural charm endearing him to world leaders

of the bewildering changes that Rajiv Gandhi went through, a complex metamorphosis that turned him into an unrecognisable enigma, a man with many faces and many masks, each one made more grotesque by his original promise and endearing naivete.

THERE was Rajiv the Reluctant, the western-educated liberal, dabbling hesitatingly in the one thing he detested the most—Indian politics. "I don't understand politics. I find it dirty. No one knows who is saying what and why." he remarked in all honesty.

Fiercely protected by his friends, later to become his aides, the political debutant was finding his feet, starting to enjoy his new role, seeing himself as a possible instrument of change. The apolitical man and the immovable political object were on a collision course even then, except no one doubted his ability to transform the system. He wore the look of a winner.

The unprecedented mandate afforded him after the assassination of his mother only reinforced that image. Fate, however tragic, had provided India with just the leader it was looking for. Young. Dynamic. Modern-minded. A man with

#### **RAJIV THE STATESMAN**

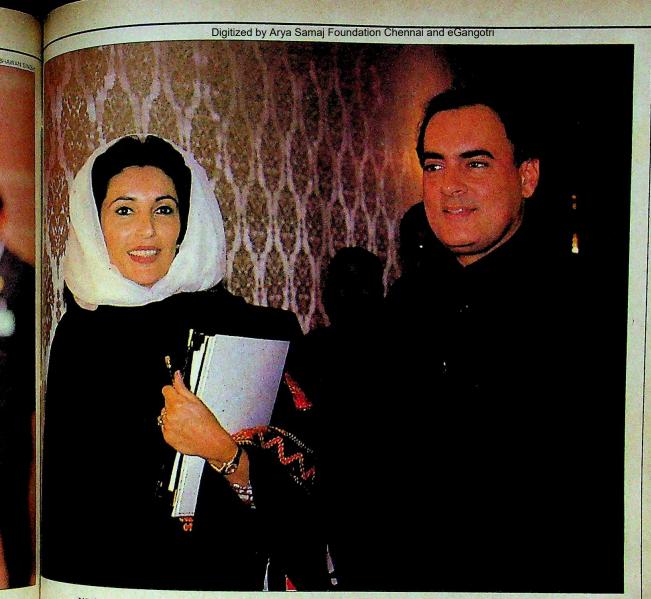
- I dream of an India—strong, independent dent, self-reliant, and in the front ranks of the nations of the world.
- Forty years of Independence have shown not that the country is too big to be governed, but that its people are too independent to be governed badly.
- As a politician there are big challenges,
  his are all the second se big successes and big failures and when it works, yes, it makes you feel good and when it doesn't work, it is all the more challenging

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Mitical bag on-to pro intellect and Rehension ncomplicat he euphor dyjustified a man sation. In elation, a lew econo dal thrust scathing; abay again

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With the former Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto, both heirs to a political dynasty.

## initial homage to South Asian Cooperation turned into the image of a regional bully boy.

dical baggage to weigh him down in his oft-declared in-topropel India into the 21st century. He had neither stellect and vision of his grandfather nor the political incomplicated. Mr Idealism. And Mr Hope.

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the euphoria he generated in those early years was euphoria he generated in those early years was signified. Rajiv the Moderniser had arrived. Suddenly, a man in a hurry, waving the magic wand of elation. India's consumer boom, the computer culture, we economic political language. The Anti-Defection of the elation in the elation of the elation was a wesome in its potential.

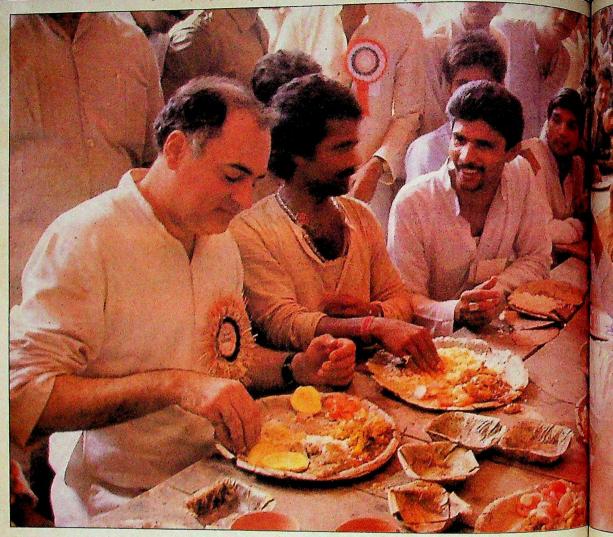
scathing attack at the Congress centenary celebrations backs of millions of Congress workers, converting a solvenent into a feudal oligarchy", was not seen as a sean stables. That those stirring words, uttered with lepitaph, is the boldest and most compelling testimony sfallure to grapple with the malaise that eventually

overtook his century-old party and his government.

But in those first 18 months, the teflon held firm. The arrival of Rajiv the Statesman seemed like natural progression. The swift succession of accords—Punjab, Mizoram, Assam—was broadened in scope by dazzling success on foreign fronts. A personal rapport with Mikhail Gorbachev, his wooing of Ronald Reagan's America, South Asian Cooperation. Almost overnight, he transformed India's image in the world arena. The champagne bubbled—and then burst.

E had the mandate. And the opportunity. But soon, like sand, it started slipping through his fingers. Rajiv the Vacillator had arrived. Palace plots had taken their toll. Trusted friends had gradually been discarded, the team that worked so well in tandem—V.P. Singh, Arun Nehru, Arun Singh, Arjun Singh—sidelined in favour of sycophants and self-seekers. The doers and thinkers had given way to gate-keepers, men of petty minds and shrunken stature.

Many of his one-time political advisers saw the dangers but were helpless to act. The political handlers had taken over. Rajiv seemed to be now basing his decisions on the last person



Surrounded by Congress(I) workers and local politicians, Rajiv finds time from a hectic tour of Bihar 190, to eat

#### Isolated and increasingly insecure, by the mid-point of his mandate Rajiv was clea

who had his ear. More so, if the returns were politically favourable to the Congress(I). Like his mother, Rajiv was equating the party with the country. What was good for the party became, in some distorted fashion, good for India.

The gap between the promises and the performance had visibly started to widen. The Shah Bano case. The bungling over the Punjab accord. The lack of will and poor advice that led him to stall the promised handing over of Chandigarh. A sudden, panicky hike in petrol prices only to bring them down a few days later. Rajiv seemed to be speaking in two voices. His and someone else's.

This was a new Rajiv. Rajiv the Naive. A man obsessed with change but trapped in his own contradictions, seemingly-and suddenly-unable to decide for himself, increasingly dependent on the same hangers-on and power brokers he had promised to purge. Now, they were back, the mocking monkey on his back, diverting him from his chosen mission. The bureaucratic behemoth was still intact, undented by his attempts to change the status quo. "I came up against blocks, vested interests. I couldn't break through." he admitted later. He still had the mandate and much of the mission but he was now marching to a different drumbeat. The more he tried to change the system, the more it changed him.

LTIMATELY, the change was inexplicable. Rajiv was clearly a man with more in common with the world leaders he was so comfortable with. Abroad, he revelled in the spotlight, displaying devastating wit and a quick graft of world affairs. In contrast, the politicians and members of fossilised party seemed like aliens from another planet.

That he eventually became one with them—in mind and print—is just an at in spirit—is just another of the many ironies that dogged his life and times and turned him into something of a spersonality. personality. A modern young man schooled in moral course who yet constantly sought refuge in the sycophantic security of the hidebayed Constantly sought refuge in the sycophantic security of the hidebayed Constant Security of the hidebound Congress culture.

The public sacking of his foreign secretary was the first that one most sign that one mask—Mr Nice Guy—was peeling off to revel the one beneath—Rajiv the Ruthless. The new Rajiv was not in the image of his was in the image of his was in the image. in the image of his mother, a hard-headed politician increasingly in league with it. ingly in league with intrigue and obsessed with paranoia Singh, the Reim Singh, the Rajiv government's symbol of economic

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abroad. We will teach them such a lesson that they will remember their grandmothers."

This was another Rajiv, chopping and changing his cabinet and his chief ministers much in the manner of his late mother, suspicious, brooding and aloof, a victim of his own paranoia and uncaring of the increasingly sullen public mood. The once-quick mind and political courage were missing. Rajiv seemed unable to come to grips with the many complex crises that had overtaken his government.

RI Lanka, Punjab, Kashmir, Assam, Once spectacular symbols of success were now forlorn signposts to failure. Quick-fix solutions that offered short-term gains appeared favourable to complex responses that required time and excessive thought and long-term returns. It almost appeared that Rajiv found it easier to let others do the thinking for him. The fact that it was his image that was being destroyed, his mandate that was being recklessly squandered. seemed inconsequential.

The result: Rajiv the Reckless. The Sri Lanka accord was a classic example of the new style, rushing into solutions without adequate preparation or thought. The Kashmir accord was another, fated to end in disaster but considered necessary for imaginary-and narrow-political gains. The entire policy-making framework was being subverted by the omnipotent PMO, a collection of loyal and over-enthusiastic bureaucrats who distanced Rajiv even further from his real responsibilities-and the real India.

Hemmed in by a security wall, isolated from the people, kept ignorant of the danger signals, it was Rajiv's immaturity as a leader that was now on display. The petulance, the pettiness, the paranoia and, above all, the obsessive protectiveness of friends with dubious motivations. The transformation from an anti-establishment image to The Establishmentarian was now complete. He now-needed the system more than it needed him.

By the mid-point of his mandate, the dream had turned badly sour. Steeped in scandals, he shed his inherent openness in favour of unseemly attacks on the Opposition, on the press, on foreign forces. Bofors marked the major turning point in Rajiv's evolution as a politician. Mr Clean was now Mr Cornered. If any one event did the most damage to Rajiv—as a man, as a politician and as prime minister-it was Bofors. It was a devastating blow from which he never quite recovered.

Instead of coming clean and proving he had nothing to hide, he chose to sidestep and evade direct questions. The bungling on Bofors was easily his most serious mistake. The public impression was that of a desperate politician out to shield errant friends. The evasiveness was so unlike Rajiv that it single-handedly changed forever his image in the public eye.

The very weapons he chose for self-defence were self-destructive. The ill-advised Defamation Bill—a clumsy attempt to plug the flood of damaging media revelations-

#### RAJIV THE POLITICIAN

- The Opposition is a platform made of different planks with no nails to hold them together.
- It is a national affront, not a National Front.
- V.P. Singh is willing to divide India in a manner that even the British could not do.
- Am I expected to reply to every dog that barks?
- We took such a beating on Bofors. As far as I know, no one from my government was involved.



Sharing a light moment with local children while on a trip to Mizoram along with wife Sonia.

### His yupple Image always dogged him and even his holidays became a source of controversy.

led to an embarrassing climbdown. The Muslim Women's Bill damaged his secular image. The Panchayati Raj—'power to the people'—was seen as political desperation.

Flashes of the old Rajiv remained. In private, he was as charming as ever, claiming that he still didn't feel like he was prime minister. The playful, adventurous side of his nature surfaced occasionally: the Dolphin-saving holidays, the Run For My Country jogs down Janpath, the para-jumping and the childlike enjoyment of flying his own

#### RAJIV THE PLAYFUL

- I miss time with the family, being able to get out and do things.... It's almost impossible because there is so much tamasha.
- I like to take a break now and then. I guess that is only human.
- I still love flying. I find it very relaxing.
- I don't know how we got labelled as the computer boys, colour televisionwallahs, the consumer items crowd...I have never owned a pair of Gucci loafers in my life.

plane and driving his own car. The vision seemed intact as was his awareness of the problems. The technology missions under Sam Pitroda were clearly a belated attempt to outflank the bureaucracy. But the reactions and instincts were unalterably changed. Clearly, the political Rubicon had been crossed. There was now no turning back.

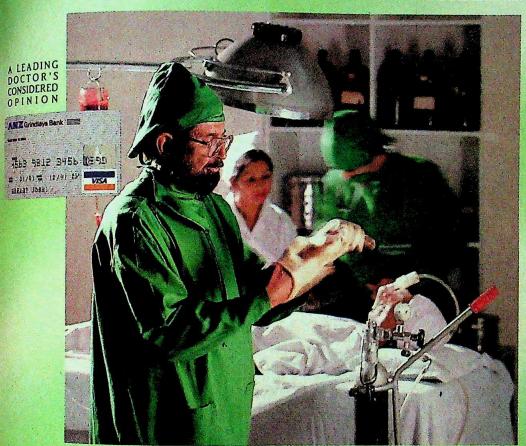
Now, the Dhawans and Fotedars were back, people he had discarded without so much as a twinge of political conscience. Now, he clearly revelled in the syco-

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phancy. Now, he gloried in his image as the Supreme Leader of India's largest political party, cutting down potential challengers with a ruthlessness and arrogance that was an Indira Gandhi trademark.

The tyro had become the teacher, a master of manipulation and intrigue. That the road he chose ended at a political dead-end, he seemed blissfully unaware. Power had corrupted. Absolute power had corrupted absolutely. The political consequence was inevitable. The irony, inescapable. The man who had earned a historic mandate as Mr Clean in 1984. was, five years later, rudely ejected from power. His successors? The very people he had once trusted and then disdainfully discarded.

NTER Rajiv the Opposition Leader. Certainly, he seemed different, more humble and contrite. "In all humility, we accept the people's verdict. We pledge to offer constructive support to the new government." His farewell speech on Doordarshan brought back poignant memories of the old Rajiv, a man seemingly aware that he had gone horribly wrong and where exactly he had gone wrong.

But, in essence, nothing much appeared to have changed. The traditional, die-hard Congress culture served to ensure that. The coterie remained the same, playing on his vanity, feeding on his flaws and convincing him that it was only a matter of days before he was back in the prime minister's chair. Soon, the familiar arrogance was back, the back-room intrigues, the wheeling and dealing-as evidenced by the dismissal of the Karunanidhi government under pressure from Rajiv and his party.

The sudden onset of the elections—19 months after he was thrown out of power-seemed to have recharged his old batteries. The image of the Happy Warrior plunging through the crowds, aware he had lost touch with them and was now eagerly striving to show them he still greatly cared, was once again in clear evidence.

This was Rajiv the Indefatigable, the man who received his energy-and his power-from the people. Throughout his tortuous campaign-sleeping barely a couple of hours a day—Rajiv was like a man reborn. Laughing and joking with the crowds, playfully throwing garlands at women, scolding his security for keeping the crowds at bay. Rajiv seemed to have rediscovered his place in the sun.

Forgotten were the scandals and the mismanagement, the

bungles and the bluster. The crowds seemed to sense that here was a different Rajiv, even, perhaps, the old Rajiv. Shorn of the sycophants and the cliques and the courtiers, Rajiv was a man transformed. A man of the people.

The wheel had come full circle. That undefinable spark was once again in evidence. Whether it would flicker momentarily only to be snuffed out by the system that had trapped him once earlier, is a question that now lies buried in an obscure place with an unpronounceable name. -DILIP BOBB



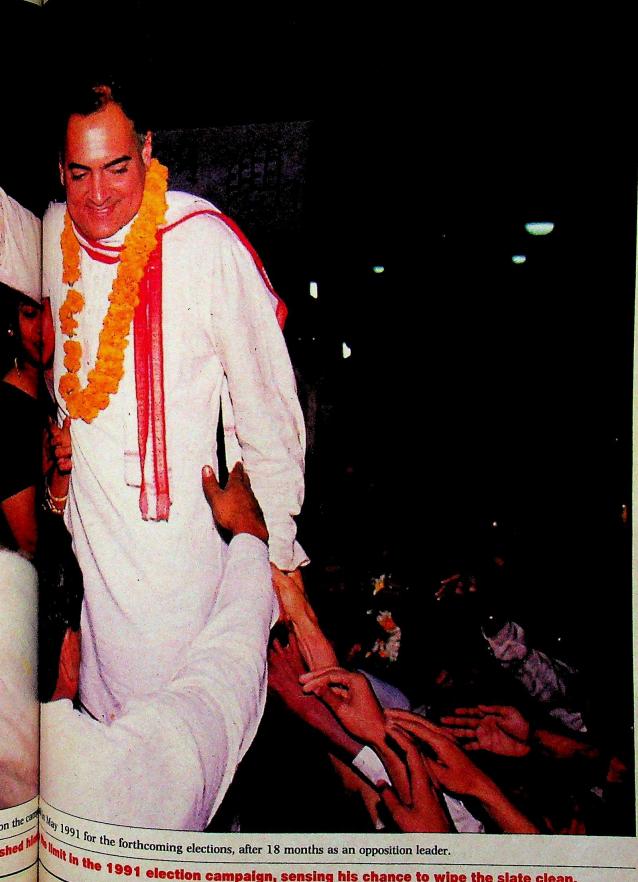
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#### RAJIV THE CAMPAIGNER

- Vote for Congress if you want Ram Rajya.
- I have never felt vulnerable nor restricted in my movements. It has never bothered me.
- I campaigned this way before I was prime minister, I'm not prime minister now, so I am campaigning this way again.
- There will be plenty of violence during these elections. People are frustrated.
- I can say that our second tenure will be better. than the first one.

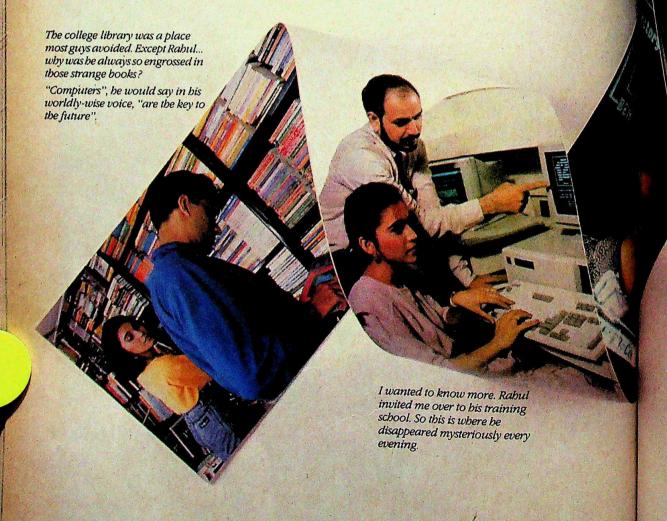
SHARAD SAXENA



In the 1991 election campaign, sensing his chance to wipe the slate clean.

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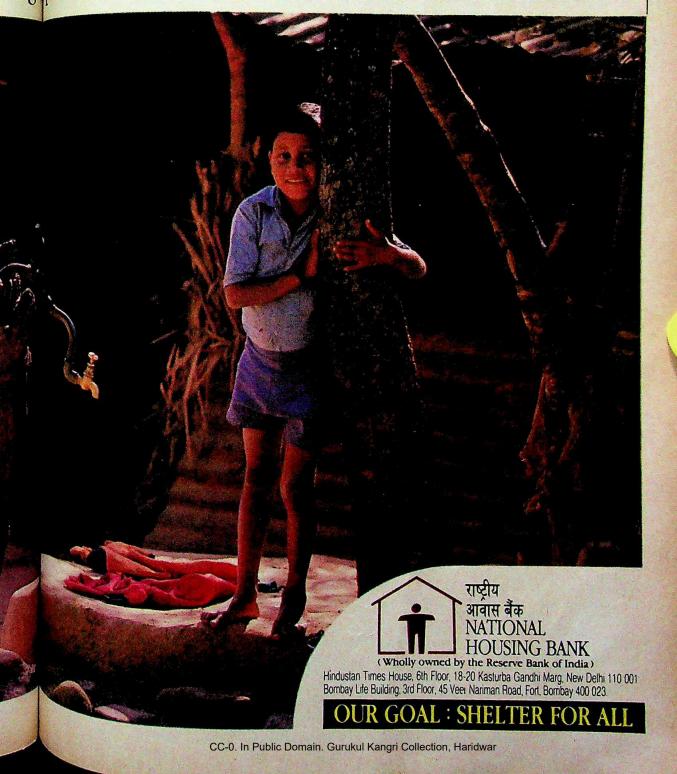
On the long journey ahead that we are determined to complete.

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# THE HALF-WAY HOUSE

ALL Rajiv Gandhi what you will. A liberal, a failed liberal, or a brave-new-worlder who discovered that the politics of business was too hot to handle. Label him as a man who wanted the Maruti mantra to open up the uncharted universe of consumerism in India, or a man tied up with the same red-tape that he tried, for a while, to dispense with. A

man who pushed for liberalisation in the first three years of his term, but after the Bofors scandal broke in 1987. practically took his hands off the economic lever.

Right on all counts. Because Rajiv personified precisely this mix of hope and helplessness. Of initiating policies, then giving up before running the distance. As prime minister, he ran a halfway house between Nehruvian socialism and the promise of a hi-tech 21st century India. "But half-way houses are important," says I.Z. Bhatty, honorary director of New Delhi-based National Council of Applied Economic Research. "At least it is

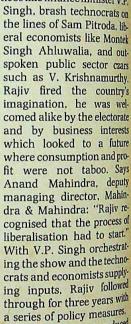
half-way there.' This is perhaps Rajiv's greatest contribution to the Indian economy. He nudged India out of its morisystems and his move to-

wards liberalisation changed the terms of economic debate. Currently, liberalisation is a hot topic. The manifestos of all major parties-except the Left parties-talk of lessening government controls, opening up the economy to freemarket competition, slashing public sector inefficiency, selling off state companies to private shareholders and bringing in foreign investment. Whether monopolystruck businessmen and morass-loving bureaucrats like it or not, this approach is fast

gaining acceptance as the only way out for India. Not because the IMF or the World Bank demand it, but because India's survival does.

While there is now a sense of inevitability about economic reform, it all began with hope. In end-1984, Rajiv moved in with a team of no-nonsense politicos like finance minister V.P.

Busiration by AJIT NINAN and ANIL SHARMA



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Direct taxes were reduced in the landmark 1985-86 budget for companies anderemption limits for persona income tax raised. In the following year's budget, the Government added gift and wealth taxes to the list, Reve nue collection actually went up. The Long Term Fiscal Policy was announced to tell business that economic policies would not bend with each passing breeze. Tax reform was attempted with the introduction of the Modified Value Added Tax.

By broadbanding certain products, the Rajiv regime made it far easier for a manu facturer to diversify without having to run for a licente every time he wanted to introduce a new product. For



#### **GROUNDED HOPES**

- Rajiv never took the liberalisation plunge, like Nawaz Sharif has in Pakistan.
- The bureaucracy slowed, and in some cases stymied, his economic policies.
- After Bofors, it was back to platitudes and populist measures.
- The Rajiv era monopolists paid lipservice to liberalisation. They never wanted competition to come in.

mple, a truck manufacturer Idnot need a fresh licence to aduce cars—provided it exceed licensed capacthe whole thing was thed under the four-wheeler The Government ensed certain industries unwhe Monopolies and Restric-Trade Practices (MRTP) Act, and the asset limit for MRTP spanies from Rs 20 crore to 100 crore, and removed pricand distribution controls for such industries minium. Relaxing imports modernisation and providing gorters benefits had a draatic effect on India's export mings (see chart). Being a aputer buff himself, Rajiv mered the computer hardgreand software trade, allowmitlicences and benefits which sarred stunning growth. The salt the economy grew stea-F. Even in the drought year of 37-88, industrial production istered a sharp upswing, and e capital markets practically at through the roof.

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VanIndia known for thinking mall, Rajiv generated highthe optimism. By prescribing imum economic sizes for inby to achieve economies of he changed the way Ina industry worked. People anto think big—even about stets outside—about megaats. Within a few weeks in autumn of 1989, four mega sues—of Usha Rectifier Essar Gujarat, Larsen & to (L&T) and Bindal Agro he share bazaar for over 1500 crore. That's more than hemoney raised by the entire al market in 1985.

but if Rajiv is remembered for anything, it's the conhe kicked off. Entreequispitched in to tap a 100on-strong market with longcraving for so-called ty items—cars, two-whee-Ty sets, VCRs, the works. the consumerist mood still but something went very in 1987: the souring of Gandhi, V.P. Singh was no Enfinance minister, the Boscandal broke and in its high, the country's go-getchief executive assumed a

CARS **Production in Numbers** 1990-91 1.73 lakh\* 69% **INCREASE** 1985-86 1.02 lakh Annualised. TWO-WHEELERS **Production in Numbers** 1990-91 19.22 lakh\* 61% **INCREASE** 1985-86 11.91 lakh \*Annualised. TV SETS **Production in Numbers** 1990-91 48.50 lakh\* 96% **INCREASE** 1985-86 24.80 lakh Estimate. **EXPORTS** 1990-91 Rs 32,257 crore 199% **INCREASE** 1985-86 Rs 10,895 crore INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT Index 1980-81 = 100 1990-91 225.3\* **59%** INCREASE 1985-86 142.1 CAPITAL ISSUES 1989-90 Rs 6,551 crore 193% **INCREASE** 1985-86 Rs 2,237 crore Source: CMIE The middle class and entrepreneurs saw in Rajiv Gandhi a messiah of consumption. More was definitely the merrier, and bigger, the better.

defensive posture. He decided that a populist stance made for a stable prime minister. This was the position of a man beset by accusations that a coterie of close associates was calling the shots, deciding which industrialist should be given permission to set up projects. This was the era when the Ambanis were being handed L&T and multicrore petrochemical projects on a platter. It was back to the licence-permitraj, that hallowed Indian tradition perpetuated by the politician-bureaucrat network and guarded by monopolists. While liberalisation didn't come to a halt, it didn't go far either. The free-market promises remained just that, promises.

This was the time of the loan melas and Jawahar Rozgar Yojanas, ill-planned and ill-executed schemes which taxed the exchequer and gave nothing in return. Subsidies increased, fertiliser in particular, and increased defence imports ate into the country's balance of payments position. Rajiv complained that the bureaucrats were stalling his reforms, but he was able to do nothing about it. The public sector remained inefficient, budget deficits increased and the earlier long-term policy measures remained on the shelves. The Long Term Fiscal Policy and the proposed re-examination of exportimport tariffs were dropped. ITC Chairman J.N. Sapru summed it up succintly at a recent lecture in Madras: "Liberalisation, the word that sparked off great expectations in the '80s, remained a catch phrase and was systematically distorted."

Perhaps Rajiv banked on a second term in 1989 to set things right. The same way many people were banking on him to set things right after elections. It didn't work the first time around, and his death took care of it the second time. But he did set ideas in motion. Says J.M. Rajan Pillai, chairman, Britannia Industries Limited: "Clearly, an attempt to take India into the 21st century, his efforts towards liberalisation were two of Rajiv Gandhi's most lasting contributions." Whether this legacy gets translated into action is the big question.

-SUDEEP CHAKRAVARTI



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Because, after all, the Traveller has been adby Mercedes Benz. And manufactured in a task as advanced as any Mercedes Benz plant world, using the very latest automobile inuring technologies.

The fact is Tempo's state-of-the-art new 18th Rs. 50 crores.

Extensive use of robotics and computer and manufacturing systems give the Traveller eleled welding precision and welding strength.

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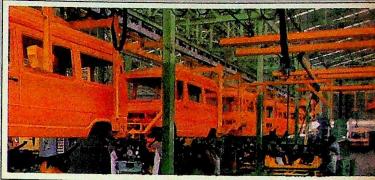
The Traveller plant's assembly environment this sophisticated. And its overhead conveyor a synchronised with a revolving assembly ensures a superb finish (as well as high unity).

What's more, the Traveller is powered by a TBHP Mercedes OM 616 engine which is dyslent, extremely fuel-efficient, as well as dyreliable. And its indirect injection system slow pollution.

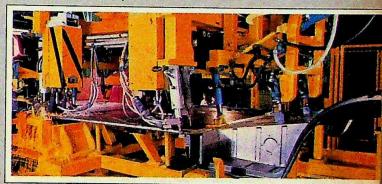
The Traveller's gearbox too, is a result of annology: a 5 speed full synchromesh gearbox too superb performance and longer transfer.

Finally, driving the Traveller is as light and hofa pleasure as driving a modern top-class atuming circle that is smaller than most

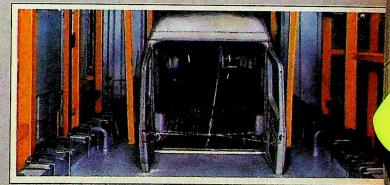
Tempo Traveller, Whichever way you look



Modern conveyorised assembly lines.



Robotics & Computer Integrated body welding shop.



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# HARD TIMES GET HARDE

S if things were not bad enough for the economy, already. The elections, if completed as scheduled earlier, may not have handed out a decisive majority to any party, but the signals being beamed by various opinion polls were that Rajiv Gandhi would have had a hand in the formation of a new government. That was enough to keep the stock markets and industry in good cheer. Till events in Sriperumbudur intervened, sending India's economic future into a tailspin.

Rajiv's sudden death, coming as it did after two aborted coalition experiments and general political flux, has cast its ominous shadow on the immediate future of the economy. The already-late budget for the current year is certain to be further delayed. Which, in turn, means that India's applications to the IMF for a second loan and to the World Bank for additional aid will not bring in succour till late-September or early-October.

And that's just the good news. The bad news is that the delawin the formation of a government means that businessmen have placed all but the most minor investment decisions on hold. "We can't plan anything for the next few months," complains a Pune-basel industrialist. Industrialists are uncertain about new tax proposals. though the present prohibitive curbs on hard currency releases and the crushing credit squeeze are taxing them hard enough. Major government projects have failed to go beyond the drawing boardthese include oilfield development projects, a gas-based power plant a petrochemicals complex and expansion and modernisation programmes for existing steel units. The Eighth Plan (1990-95) not in sight. In short, just about everything connected to the world of business and finance is in a state of suspended animation. It will stay that way till the next government presents its full-fledged budget and provides clear macro-economic pointers.

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# WHAT HAPPENS

The one near-certainty and new budget cannot be presented before end-July. Earlier it was expected that a new government would have six clear weeks to work out the budget numbers by mid-July. Now the country will get its next finance minister only in the second half of June. And even if he slaves for amonth, it will be end-July before the world knows how he intends tackling the mess. The budget can't be postponed further for the current spending authorisation ends in July after which the administrative machinery will grind to a halt. "The time available to a new government to formulate the budget has been reduced by two weeks or so (because of the postponement of the polls)." says a Finance Ministry official.

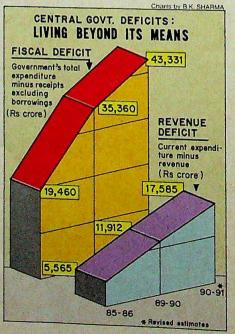
The Government's options have been narrowed by the fact that the country has to approach the IMF for another bail-out loan soon. The IMF bosses are keen watchers hissens its of the budget bottom line and they will definitely be poring after the over the fiscal deficit (see chart) which currently is well overs in But ev per cent of gross domestic product.

Cutting the fiscal deficit means that spending will have to be axed and taxes increased. This is what Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha tried to do in his interim budget of February. now in limbo. (In it, he proposed cuts in major subsidies-on food, fertiliser and exports—from Rs 9,550 crore in 1990-916 Rs 8,616 crore this year and decided to offload chunks of share of public sector companies to mutual funds.) Any new

government will have to try and do the same, perhaps with variations

What has compounded the diffculties involved in reducing the deficit is the sharp drop (around R 1,600 crore) in tax revenues in relation to the targets set, especially the fall in corporate tax collection (again of over Rs 1,000 crore). Clearly all not well with the Government's tar machinery. In mid-February, it was estimated that corporate tax colle tions would be Rs 6,350 crore in the year which ended last March 3 Barely two months later, as the figures were being totted up the Government realised that the actual collections were short by as much 16 per cent of the revised estimate

The task of raising revenues has been made particularly onerous cause whatever extra indirect lare the Government intends garnering during the current fiscal year have to be mopped up in eight



INDIA TODAY . JUNE 15, 1991

mand not a full year. "Since taxes will have been levied fals for four months. I think there may be a sizeable loss reflect during the current year though it is difficult to fill this stage, "says J.D. Desai, an economist with the real Credit and Investment Corporation of India. This juply that the rise in the rates of excise and customs amounced during the budget could be quite steep. us Deepak Nayyar, the Government's chief economic "Afiscal adjustment is necessary and the delay in the abudgetary process means that the task has been made and adjustment has delayed for a number of years, it is bound to be a rather filone. The only real choice the next finance minister will grindeciding what to tax and what not to; what to axe inhat not to. If he doesn't make the choice, the IMF will.

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## WHAT HAPPENS TO THE IMF LOAN?

Methe impiseager to see action on the fiscal deficit before blosens its purse-strings, the absence of a stable governafter the polls could anyway make it cagey about But even if it believed the finance minister's budget ers and the reforming zeal of India's politicians and saucrats, it cannot deliver the money soon enough or in wantities desired. Rajiv's assassination and the delays n up by the electoral process mean that the earliest an would be available is September. And even then, the billion (Rs 5,000 crore) that may be sought would be quate to bridge the anticipated foreign exchange gap in not less than \$4.5 billion (Rs 9.000 crore). stually, it isn't just the IMF that is tossing India the odd

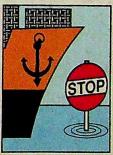
dollars or two. The Asian opment Bank has loaned the try some \$150 million (Rs 300 <sup>and a similar</sup> amount is being and by the Japanese Governboth for diesel imports. The anshave also chipped in with a for fertiliser imports. And, be-The proposed new \$2.5 billion the IMF, the World Bank approached for a structural ment loan of \$500 million (Rs which will not be tied to cprojects. The formal applicasessill to be made, but that has Apped North Block mandarins between Delhi and aggon to do the spadework on the next govwant the money.

late-January loan from the January loan Home Is true the country of him a rock-bottom thus over Rs 1,500 crore allogess than two weeks' import

requirements) to over Rs 4,700 crore. But the high oil import bill saw even these reserves getting steadily depleted-by end-April, reserves were down to Rs 2,800 crore and by mid-May the cushion was down to an uncomfortable Rs 2,500 crore. With a bit of luck, reserves will be maintained at this low level over the next two months because the Aid-India Consortium has agreed to provide over \$600 million (Rs 1,200 crore) by end-June, most of it in the form of accelerated disbursements against future expenditure commitments.

The Government hopes that the rest of the foreign exchange gap will be met by bilateral aid. Only then will it have adequate hard currency to ensure that essential imports of oil, fertiliser and machinery are not drastically cut. Once upon a time the Government had great faith in non-resident Indian (NRI) inflows to shore up the foreign exchange front. But, if anything. NRIs have put head over heart in recent years and the growth rate of NRI deposits has slowed down to a trickle over the past six months. Privately, Finance Ministry officials say that a large-scale withdrawal of funds, especially the hotmoney parked in foreign currency non-resident accounts. can't be entirely ruled out.

That is one reason why the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) indiscriminately clamped down on imports, since the Government cannot afford to default on any of its international loan repayment obligations which work out to around Rs 600-700 crore a month. Fear of default and the downgrading of India's credit rating abroad mean that short-term credit-the lifeblood of international trade—has become either too costly or too scarce. Or both.



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## WHEN WILL IT BE BUSINESS AS USUAL?

THE answer: probably not in 1991-92. The experience of the last financial year and the impact of the Gulf war have made sure that business cannot be normal for some time. For at least two important reasons: the forex crunch and the domestic cash squeeze. The two are connected, for when the RBI imposed crippling margins on hard currency releases for importers (200 per cent in most cases), their need for credit suddenly skyrocketed. Meanwhile, the RBI's new credit policy announced in May this year decided to squeeze credit flows to the corporate sector to dampen inflationary

NRI DEPOSITS:

SLOWING

Total liabilities to non-

resident Indians

DOWN

19,000

18,000

pressures. Put another way, it means the RBI, in its role as guardian of the country's foreign exchange position. pushed up the demand for credit; in its other role as the country's monetary authority, it played Scrooge,

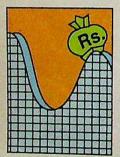
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making bank credit both costly and difficult to come by. The net result: in May, banks were charging one another usurious rates of up to 45 per cent in the inter-bank call money market and at least one foreign bank-ANZ Grindlaysannounced that it would not lend at rates below what it borrows. In the short-term, that means heavy working capital costs for the corporate sector. And since the primary capital markets have gone into a slump in the wake of political uncertainties, companies have no way of substituting bank-financed working capital with funds directly raised from investors.

With the budget and IMF bailouts some months away, it is highly improbable that the RBI will ease the curbs imposed on foreign exchange releases before September or October. The hard currency

reserves position is unlikely to improve by then. Says Rahul Bajaj, head of the country's largest two-wheeler manufacturing company: "I don't anticipate any significant fall in demand (for industrial products). What I'm worried about are supply constraints, especially the supply of foreign exchange for imports."

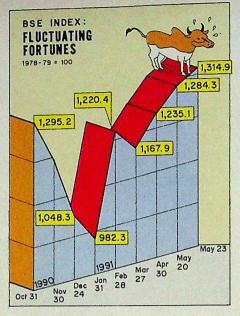
Even if he is being pessimistic, industry will face the crunch in a new area: energy costs. To keep the oil import bill at reasonable levels, the Finance Ministry has asked the Petroleum Ministry to contain petroleum demand at last year's level. It had made a similar plea a year earlier but with limited success. In 1991-92, it may take more drastic measures to contain the use of petroleum if the international price of crude per barrel looks like exceeding the \$18-20 range. For every additional dollar the price of world crude puts on, the country pays an extra Rs 400 crore annually.



### WHAT HAPPENS TO THE CAPITAL MARKETS?

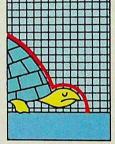
BEFORE Rajiv's death, the mood in the country's stock-markets was reasonably upbeat as the Congress(I) was expected to return to power. But the tragedy immediately generated panic kerb trading. Around 11.30 p.m. on May 21, frantic calls flew across the country with brokers downgrading major scrips in informal deals. Reliance, buoyed at Rs 155 on the 'kerb' earlier, crashed to Rs 120-122.

The next morning, the market mood—like the mood in the whole country-was distinctly gloomy. But scrips perked up a little with the news that Sonia Gandhi would become the Congress(I) president. The following day, when Sonia declined the offer, the markets dithered. On the kerb, the prices of many leading scrips slumped.



"Economics has ceased to matter," says Mahesh Natani, a Delhi broker, adding that politics and emotions are determining investor sentiments. The assassination, says Dina Mehta, partner of a Bombay stockbroking firm, may lead to a "dip in the market between 5 and 7 per cent. But I don't foresee a major crash".

Value-wise, the stock indices may not lose much but trading volumes are certainly thin, So brokers may not take bigger risks. But the primary markets are badly affected. The amount raised by private companies through new issues has crashed from Rs 2,793 crore in 1989-90 to Rs 1,704 crore last year. The tragedy in Tamil Nadu has blasted the corporate sector's near-term hopes of raising more money from the public.



### WILL THE **ECONOMY** SLOW DOWN IN 1991-92?

OST definitely, though the severity of it depends on MOST definitely, though the severity of it depends how draconian the new government's corrective actions are. If efforts to cut spending are accompanied by measures like hikes in the prices of petroleum, railway freight, coal and steel, the rate of inflation is likely to go up. The import curbs will slow down industry segments like consumer electronics, computers and automobiles.

The signals are mostly bearish. For one, after years of living beyond its means, 1991-92 will have to be a year of belt-tightening. That means cuts in government expenditure. Says economist K.N. Raj: "Not just subsidies, even development spending may have to be slashed.

The credit squeeze is expected to continue through the better part of 1991-92, effectively adding costs to an already high-cost economy. The impact of all these measures is expected to lower the profitability of the corporate sector. Worse, one huge question-mark hangs from the skies; the monsoon. Currently the best the country's supercomputing weathermen seem to offer is a "normal monsoon but on the negative side". That may mean slow or no agricultural growth, A government economist admitted that it would be next to impossible next to impossible to expect gross domestic product to grow by 4.5 per cent and industrial production by 7.5 per cent, at they did lost they did last year. Sums up industrialist Aditya Birla: "We are headed for the state of the stat are headed for difficult times. I don't expect the foreign exchange situation to ease very much by September of October. It will take longer." If, in the aftermath of the assassination of the assassination, stable economics is more difficult to come by the hard times are likely to be even harder. —PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA with SHIV TANEJA

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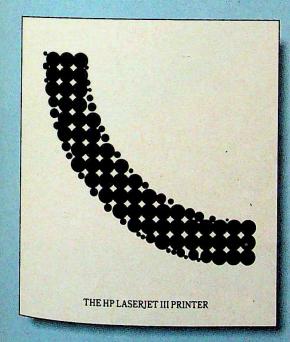
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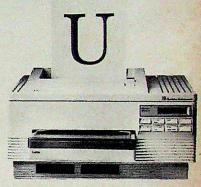
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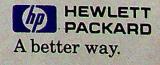
And even more remarkably we've given you the option to use all these on one page.

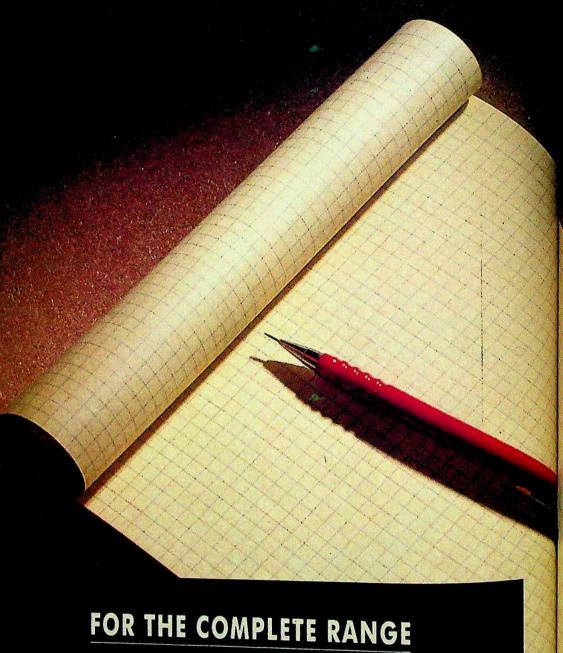
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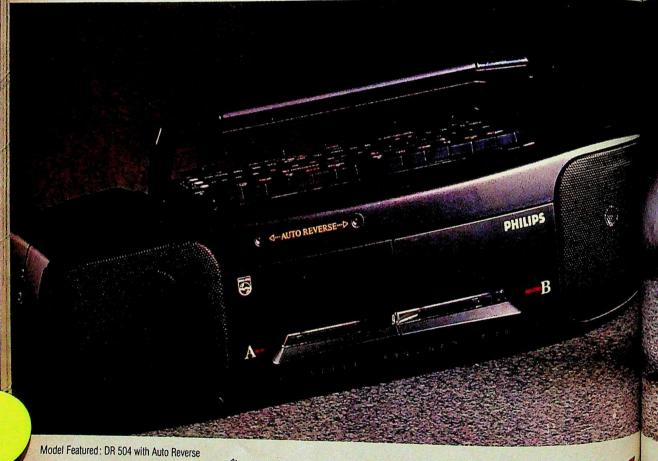
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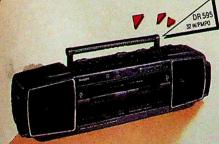




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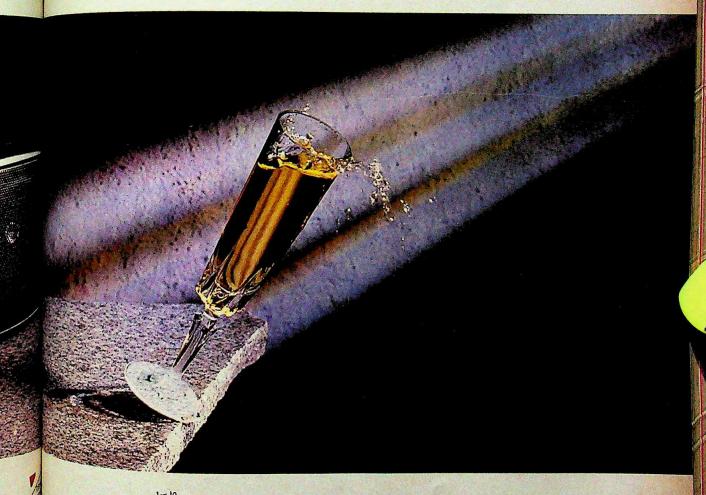
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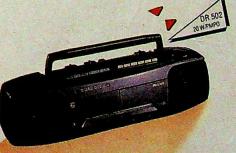
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## SUCCESSION SHENANIGANS

N a rare public display of unity, thousands of Congress(I) workers, including the entire Congress(I) Working Committee (cwc), wound their way to Allahabad in a special train carrying Rajiv Gandhi's ashes for the final immersion at Sangam. The trip was more than just the last funeral rite for a departed leader. As the train stopped at station after station to allow mourners a glimpse, its journey marked the beginning of the party's post-assassination campaign for the second

round of electioneering.

The attempt was to make a headstart in garnering what party chieftains calculate will be a massive sympathy vote. But, for several days after the assassination, the Congress(1) was unable to find a successor to Rajiv or project a united front following Sonia Gandhi's rejection of the offer of the post. The word spread by the high command was that P.V. Narasimha Rao would most likely be the consensus candidate.

The overriding objective in the immediate aftermath of Rajiv's death, however, was to construct an illusion of unity for the public. For what was going on behind closed doors was definitely not fit for public consumption—the "orphaned" leaders of the Congress(I) were engaged in vicious intrigues as part of what proved to be the ugliest and messiest succession battle the party had ever fought since its split in 1969.

It was once again the safarisuited eminence grise, R.K. Dhawan, who led the operation to draft Sonia into becoming president, assisted by the group of Rajiv's friends known as the "caucus". The moment he heard of Rajiv's death from a journalist,

Dhawan took over the entire show, co-ordinating with government officials and political leaders. The role fitted him like a glove. When Mrs Gandhi was assassinated, it was Dhawan who indicated to the then President Giani Zail Singh that Rajiv Gandhi should succeed his mother as prime minister. "Operation Dhawan" got off the ground swiftly. The afternoon following Rajiv's death, he brought together likeminded individuals such as Satish Sharma, Makhan Lal Fotedar, Vincent George, Jagdish Tytler and Ghulam Nabi

Azad. They took just half an hour to decide that Sonia sho be foisted upon the party as Rajiv's reluctant successor.

Barring Tytler and Azad, none of the four men hade held an elected party post. They were all known as perso aides to former prime ministers with no political clout of the own. But things went their way initially because when members of the cwc met later the same afternoon, it could come up with a single person to fill the void created by Ra

death. And this in a party will 106 years of history behindi. It way was clear, therefore, for palace schemers to try topena ate the Indian "royal" line.

The prime mover was Ar, Singh, chief of the Madhya R desh Congress (I) Commin "The Congress will collapse the country will break," he his colleagues. "If we are go to save them both, none of than Soniaji can doit. Soletus appeal to her to accept the responsibility." It was a both of the blue for most of the present but few of them had courage to oppose her name courage to oppose her name.

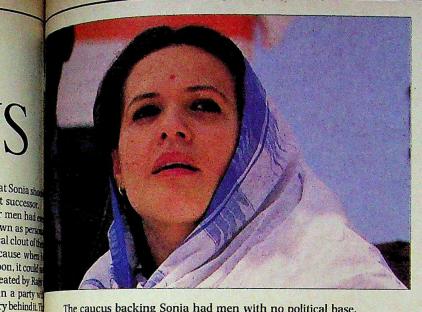
The few voices of dissent longed to Sharad Par Madhavsinh Solanki, P. Shankar and K. Karunakat the Old Man of Kerala. asked the pro-Sonia bri "Why are we in a hurry too new party chief? Let us wider consultations and per even postpone the matter the funeral." after objection was not so much Sonia as to the manner in w her name was being put for Pawar was more to the "We are in the second pha electioneering. If we elect president, who will be our

president, who will be our president, who will be our president, who will be our ministerial candidate? The ministerial candidate

Pawar was the only leader whose eyes were fixed the post-electoral scene. He was supporting Narass Rao instead of Sonia so that he could use his chief ministration clout for winning over the party to his side later, went so far as to establish contact with the new breedoff.



The party tried to construct an illusion of unity for the public even as its leaders involved themselves in intrigues and manoeuvrings.



The caucus backing Sonia had men with no political base.

### RAJIV-SONIA LOYALISTS

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R.K. DHAWAN: 53, Rajya Sabha member, Indira loyalist who was removed after Rajiv came to power, then rehabilitated in Rajiv's inner circle, no political base of his own, has never held an elected party post, mooted Sonia's name to ensure his own survival.

ARJUN SINGH: 61, MPCC(I) chief, machiavellian Thakur from Madhya Pradesh, local base, once a trusted Rajiv lieutenant, also was pointman for negotiation of Rajiv-Longowal accord, later fell out of favour, nominated Sonia, hoping to emerge the dark horse as the widow's nominee.

M.L. FOTEDAR: 58, Rajya Sabha member, permanent loyalist of the Nehru-Gandhi clan, inducted into Mrs Gandhi's coterie to keep an eye on Dhawan, after a period of exile came back to Rajiv's inner circle post-1989 polls, no political base, plumped for Sonia to retain his own sphere of influence.

GHULAM NABI AZAD: 46, was a Sanjay Gandhi acolyte, lacks a base, has been Rajiv sychophant and member of coterie, Muslim face of the party, most high-profile AICC(I) general secretary, was backing Sonia since his entire standing was dictated by proximity to the family.

SATISH SHARMA: 43, Rajya Sabha member, Rajiv's controversial pilot-friend, has no base, caught between concern for Sonia and the children and the need to ensure his own political survival, he pushed Sonia with the express purpose of retaining his backroom clout.

sober and intellectual MPs such as P. Chidambaram, Rangarajan Kumaramangalam and M.J. Akbar—all Rajiv loyalists but hostile to the idea of forcing Sonia into becoming president.

The significant point about the whole exercise was that the caucus which ruled 10, Janpath had been brazen enough to alter the very composition of the cwc by attending it themselves. H.K.L. Bhagat, AICC(1) general secretary in charge of the cwc, had made the extra-constitutional move of allowing people like Fotedar, Jitendra Prasad and George to be present while disregarding former Uttar Pradesh chief minister N.D. Tiwari, who had arrived in New Delhi within hours of the assassination. George, for example, had no business being at the meeting at all but sat in the back row urging members to accept Arjun Singh's suggestion. He and the others who flouted the rules by attending the meeting were actually members of the Central Election Coordinating Committee (CECC). Had it been correct for them to be at the cwc meeting, then logically the other members of the CECC should also have been there.

NE thing was abundantly clear from the cwc meeting: those who had no political base of their own and were inducted by Rajiv solely because of their unflinching loyalty to the Gandhi family were determined to keep the party leadership under their control and keep the dynasty going. "Operation Dhawan", supported by the likes of Ghulam Nabi Azad, Sitaram Kesari, Balram Jakhar and Meira Kumar, won the first round.

But the caucus ended up with egg on its faces when, despite relentless pressure on her lasting for about 15 hours. Sonia refused to accept the presidentship of the party, preferring to accept the advice of her apolitical friends. Led by Amitabh Bachchan, they advised her against plunging into politics, primarily because of their concern for her and her children's lives. But their argument contained plenty of other points as well:

► Power-hungry Congressmen would use her for immediate political gain and then dump her after the elections.

► She would be the target of a filthy political campaign. The BJF and the Janata Dal would rake up foreign connections and all the deals involving Rajiv's close relations. Although the issue of corruption had not featured much in the election so far. Sonia's induction would encourage the party's opponents to dig up hoary old scandals

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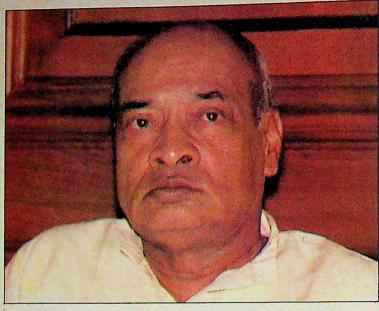
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PRASHANT PANJIAR



Senior leaders backed Rao, fearing a delay would be suicidal for the party.

### **NARASIMHA RAO BACKERS**



M. SOLANKI: 64, former Gujarat chief minister, Indira loyalist, powerful base among OBCs, had little to do with Rajiv, backed Rao to get even with the caucus which had him ousted from the chief ministership in the state, as well as from the organisational leadership.



SHARAD PAWAR: 51, Maharashtra chief minister, Rajiv distrusted and feared him the most, solid local base, backed Narasimha Rao hoping to extend his area of organisation manipulations and power operations to Centre and even make a bid for the prime ministerial job.



SHIV SHANKAR: 61, Rajya Sabha member, Indira loyalist, minister in Rajiv's cabinet, no base, backed Narasimha Rao to settle scores with the coterie of detractors from his homestate which succeeded in getting him ousted from Rajiv's inner circle.

such as Bofors, the HBJ pipeline, fertiliser plants and the involvement of Italian business leaders in these deals.

► Since she would be obliged to take a firm stand against terrorism, she and her children would be exposed to risk.

Finally, she would face humiliation and swift obscurity if the party lost the election in spite of her role in it.

In an emotional letter to party leaders, Sonia politely declined the offer. Refusing to accept defeat, "Operation Dhawan" moved upseveral gears. The Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) was activated. The CPP is normally convened by the leader or, in his absence, by the deputy leader. It could have been called by either Professor N.G. Ranga or P. Shiv

Shankar, party leader in the Rajya Sabha. Instead, it was called by a Dhawan loyalist, party secretary Chandrashekhar Reddy.

N the agenda was a draft resolution. The resolution omitted to mention the offer to Sonia. Ship Shankar, who presided over the meeting, changed the draft drastically. But before he could put the revised resolution to vote, he was surrounded by the "Shouting Brigade" of the party. S.S. Ahluwalia, the colourful Rajya Sabha member from Bihar, handed Shiv Shankar a two-page resolution extolling Sonia and her importance to the party. Ahluwalia was joined by Vishwajit Singh, another Rajya Sabha member and Arjun Singh's loyalists-Pachauri and Ratnakar Suresh Pandey. All of them wanted the CPT to adopt a resolution welcoming Sonia as the new AICC(1) chief. But Shiv Shankar refused to deviate from accepted procedures, telling Ahluwalia and his gang that the CPP meeting could not change the draft resolution. Nor was it the right forum for deciding the ALCC(1) presidentship, he insisted.

More troublesome for the caucus was Sonia's obduracy in not accepting the presidentship. But "Operation Dhawan" hadn't run out of steam yet. Instead of convening yet another meeting of the cwc, the caucus summoned a meeting of the CECC. The reason was transparent: it was packed with caucus cohorts. The meeting was presided over by Narasimha Rao but was attended by all the general secretaries of the party. Karunakaranwas issued a special invitation. Officially. the meeting was called to formulate future election strategies. When Karunakaran suggested that it was well-nigh impossible to do any such thing until the leadership issue had been resolved, he was shouted downby the caucus. The meeting ended with 100 decision being taken.

By now senior leaders, including former Union ministers, were furious about delays that they knew could be about delays that they knew could be about the sense of the sense o

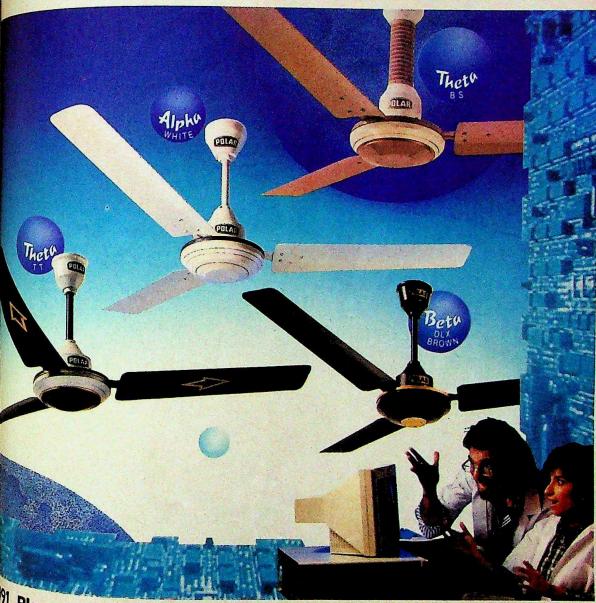
prove suicidal. Once Sonia had made it clear she had no intention of changing her mind, they mounted pressure on the cwc to elect a new leader. Vasant Sathe spoke out in favour of Narasimha Rao. Another former Union ministed Dinesh Singh demanded: "The cwc must now, without further delay, decide on a name for the acting president of the AICC(I) to rectify the damage done by the undue haste with which they initially decided to request Sonia Gandhito take over the reins of the party while the mutilated remains of her husband were still lying before her."

Strong words. But the caucus refused to give up. The hastily cobbled together an alternative plan for getting out

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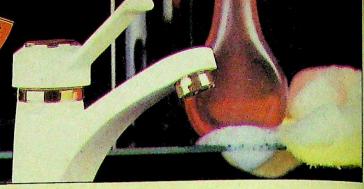
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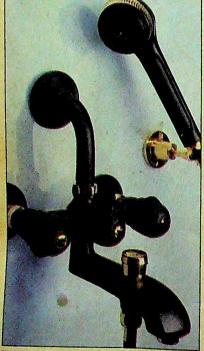
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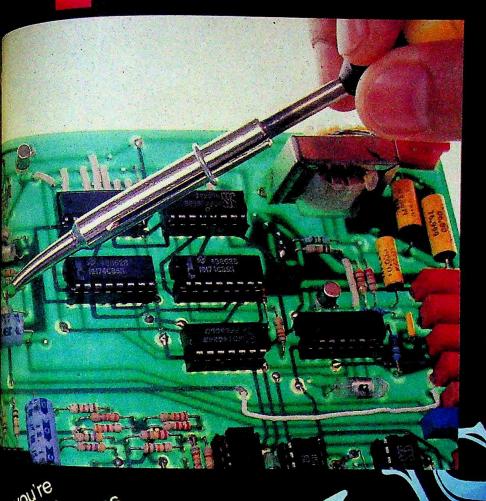
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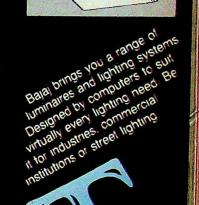


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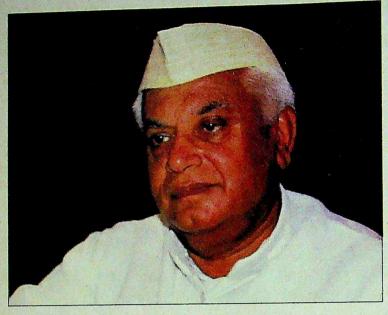
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Supporters feel Tiwari will be a contender for prime ministership after the polls.

### N.D. TIWARI SUPPORTERS



RAJENDRA KUMARI BAJPAI: 66, former UPPCC(I) president, Indira loyalist, minister in Rajiv's cabinet but little access, negligible base, supported the candidacy of party colleague Tiwari in the hope that the fast eroding base of Brahmins in Uttar Pradesh can be saved.



JAGANNATH MISHRA: 54, Rajya Sabha member, distrusted by Rajiv, solid base among labour unions and Muslims, threw his weight behind N.D. Tiwari because Tiwari can rehabilitate him, and revive the Congress(I) in the Hindi heartland as well as strengthen his power base in his state.



S.C. SHUKLA: 65, opposition leader in Madhya Pradesh, pulled out of the wilderness and made chief minister by Rajiv, has had no central role, base in Chattisgarh tribal region, backed Tiwari partly because he is a Brahmin, and partly to scuttle the prospect of sworn enemy Arjun Singh.

of their own nominees installed as the party chief. The theory among some Congress(I) leaders is that Arjun Singh suggested Sonia's name so that, in the event of her rejection, he would either emerge as her nominee or would stand to be one of the major beneficiaries of the eventual outcome.

His candidature had the backing of the caucus but it was opposed by Sharad Pawar and N.D. Tiwari. Pawar finally decided to back Narasimha Rao purely as a stop-gap leader until the elections. Tiwari himself was supported by the powerful Brahmin lobby from the north because it thought only he would be able to influence the outcome in 100-odd seats of the cow belt, out of the 323 constituencies where voting has yet to take place. He also enjoyed the backing of party leaders in Uttar Pradesh. Another argument that put forward was that since prominent non-Congress(I) leaders such as V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar were Thakurs, the Congress(I) should project a Brahmin leader.

UST as the lines were drawn for a violent internecine struggle, a surprise development took place. Arjun Singh, sensing that his chances were slim, decided to spoil Tiwari's chances—his potential rival in a future power battle. He made it known that he was no longer in the race and threw his weight behind Narasimha Rao, dressing up his decision with an altruistic motive: "In the given situation, one has to decide what is in the best interests of the party. The unity of the party is our first priority," he observed sagaciously.

The hapless Tiwari, who had just managed to muster a reasonable groundswell of support, was trapped. Forced to backtrack, he meekly announced that he had withdrawn from would support race and Narasimha Rao.

From the confusion and intrigue, Narasimha Rao emerged as the compromise candidate. His advantage is his fairly neutral persona. He neither has particularly committed supporters nor sworn detractors. This explains why he was also acceptable to the caucus; he would never pose a threat to them since they know he is not a political careerist bent on power at all costs. One certainty that has emerged from the machinations of the past week is that no single individual will assume the dual posts of prime minister and party president in future. This is one reason why the succession battle was not as unbridled in its ferocity asit could have been. The party presidentship no longer means the assumption of total power. In fact, many of Tiwari's supporters feel after the elections he will be a strong contender for the leadership of the party in Parliament

Pawar, for one, has come out with a statement that makes it clear that the AICC(1) president need not be the prime minister as well and advocates instead the theory of collective leadership. This may be an excellent step forward but will need prodigious effort to put into effect for a part that has been utterly identified with one family for over four decades. It never by identified with one family for over four decades. Its psychological fixation on charismatic personal ities—whether lawy ities—whether Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi or Rajion has been so great that self-effacing grit and determination will be required will be required to turn it towards a more mature and -PRABHU CHAWLA healthier way of conducting its affairs.

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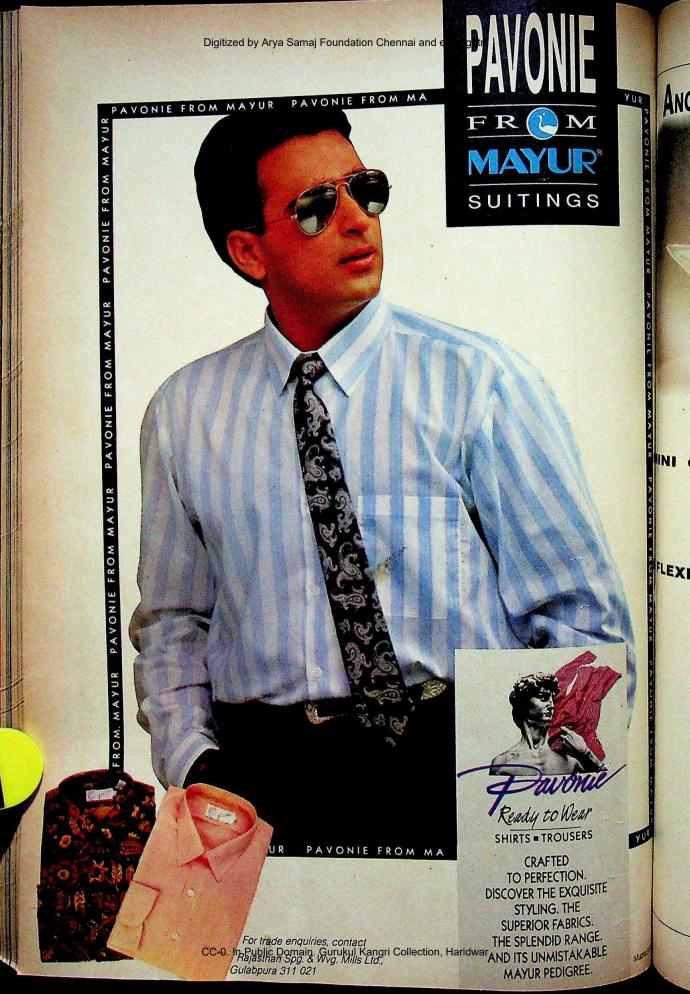
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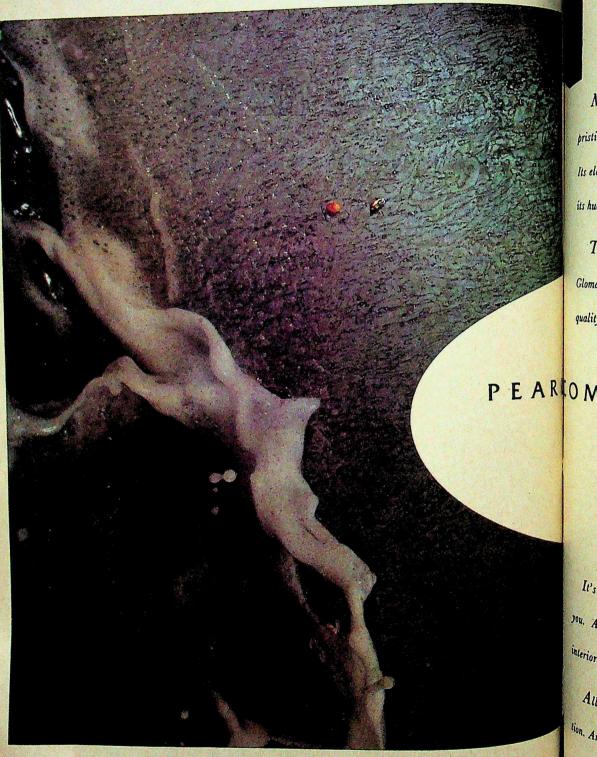
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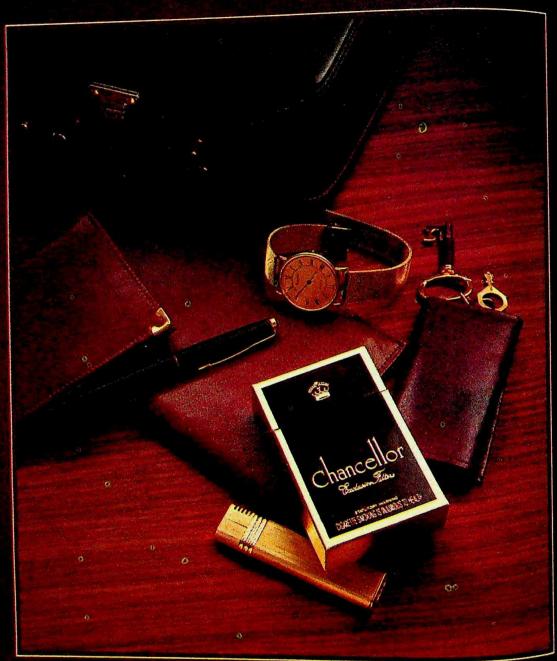
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### FLOUNDERING FOR DIRECTION

AFTER Mrs Gandhi's assassination in 1984 the Congress(I) managed to recover its nerve fairly quickly. Her son's death has plunged the party into a much repercrisis. In the past week, the Congress(I) has presented nunedifying spectacle. A party with an illustrious history at least until recently) has been thrashing around like a bached whale as it tries to come to terms with life without Laiv Gandhi. From Kerala to Arunachal Pradesh, Con-

office bearer admitted: "Unfortunately, we have no one who enjoys the confidence of the entire party all over India."

Nothing else could have explained the abysmal state of the party when it tried to select a successor to Rajiv. For the first time the Congress(I) found itself on the defensive over such a crucial question as who would be its candidate for the prime ministership. Never before had the party gone to the polls without a leader. An AICC(I) spokesman offered a weak



[as[]) leaders have been strugog to accept the devastating a that they will now have to or themselves.

So overwhelming was the dusion that for over a week se leaders were incapable of nsing a new election strategy the second phase of the polls. was no central direction no Congress(I) leader aged to inspire confidence.

that emerged was to win sympathy votes by he hart. The party's inner weaknesses were fully exposed. The that no one could even call a meeting of the top press(I) leaders or a meeting of the PCC(I) chiefs was Mony enough of its paralysis. Again, the contrast with was stark. Then, all the chief ministers, the rcc(1) chiefs distark. Then, all the chiefministers, the PCC(1) office bearers were summoned to New Delhi were involved to the party's electoral Were involved in the formulation of the party's electoral This time round even the idea of calling an haded meeting of the Congress Working Committee Mas not entertained, let alone accepted. As an AICC(1)

**Confusion reigned within** the party as the leaders struggled to devise a new election strategy for the second phase of the polls. explanation: "Why are they (the BJP and the National Front) asking us for the leader? Have they announced their candidate for the prime ministership?"

Ironically, there's never been a dearth of potential leaders. The party has destroyed any man who has ever shown leadership potential. From N.D. Tiwari to Sharad Pawar they have always been crushed before they could

even get a footing on the national stage. Consequently, the moment directions stopped coming from 10, Janpath, it was as if the organisation's life support machine had been switched off. As Sita Ram Kesari remarked: "Undoubtedly Rajiv was the Congress(I). We can't imagine the party without a Nehru-Gandhi leading it."

It was precisely this slave mentality that enfeebled the party over the years. The evidence is there for anyone to see. While the party has a stronger base in the south, it doesn't have a south Indian leader worth mentioning who can take over the party reins. And although in the north, the party has a strong leader, its popular base has been eroded.

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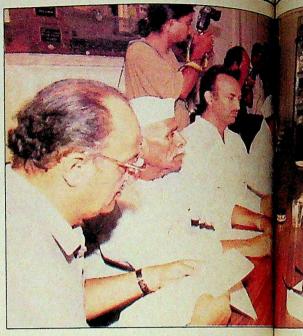
Both Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv ensured that no leader emerged on an all-India level. Further, by holding the post of AICC(I) president as well as prime minister, mother and son made it impossible for any leader to rise even at the state level. The process of dismantling the middle level leadership was hastened when Rajiv started replacing the old guard with young blood. During his stint as general secretary between

On the positive side, now removed from the shadow of the Nehru-Gandhi clan, regional bosses may come into their own and provide national leadership material.

1982-84 and later as prime minister, he chose young MPs like Ghulam Nabi Azad, Digvijai Singh, Oscar Fernandes, Birender Singh, Ashok Gehlot, Balram Singh Yadav and Tariq Anwar as either AICC(I) general secretaries or PCC(I) chiefs.

However, since none of them had the capacity to take on the old state leaders, most of them failed to create the kind of organisation Rajiv was looking for. Not surprisingly, they were eventually sacked for incompetence. With the old leaders sidelined and the young ones proving totally ineffective, the party fell into a leadership vacuum.

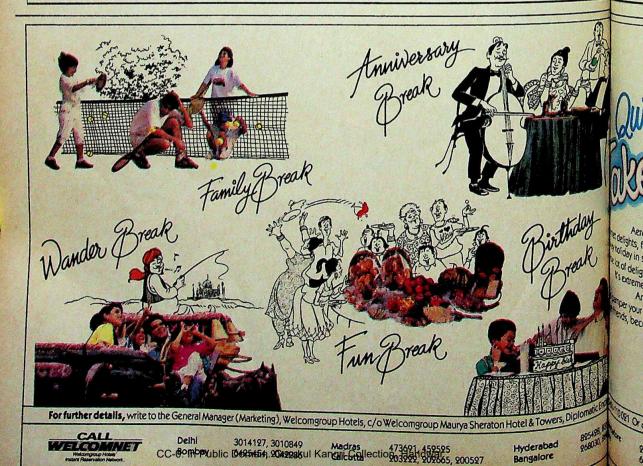
The systematic demolition of the state leaders has exposed the party's problems. Last week, when all the chief ministers



A Congress Working Committee menta new pa

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and the PCC(1) leaders assembled in New Delhi for Raja zadhan R cremation, they appeared more insecure then ever before who w Karnataka Chief Minister S. Bangarappa, for example and Howev peared visibly shaken as he had been imposed on the state! The crucial the high command. Similarly, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minist Voopana





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elhi for Rajni zadhan Reddy also looked nervous. The only chief on ever beforeser who was confident of retaining his job was Sharad example. The state of the crucial question now is, who will control the party? Chief Ministration of the state of the crucial question now is, who will control the party? Chief Ministration of the crucial question in Tamil Nadu? The

Vithal Gadgil-Sharad Pawar group in Maharashtra? Or the Bhagat-Tytler brigade in Delhi? Even if one of them manages to reign supreme, will it be able to do a good job of divide and rule? An added problem is that Congressmen are notorious for being sycophants and careerists who need a strong leader to provide them with the perks of power. Any leader or faction will have a hard time keeping the party together once party members realise that none of their so-called leaders can guarantee them a certain degree of power.

BUT there is also a flip side, which holds out hope. From despair may spring a new determination. The 'Chandra Shekhar factor' may come into play: a leader ignored, treated dismissively, banished to the periphery of politics, may, given the opportunity, come into his own and grow to a hitherto unsuspected stature. And the Congress(I) has a fund of regional heavyweights with grassroots power bases who have long been dwarfed by Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv, their rightful place in the scheme of things usurped by the 'rootless wonders', the R.K. Dhawans and M.L. Fotedars. This has for long stunted the organic blossoming of the party.

However, now removed from the shadow of the Nehru-Gandhi clan, regional bosses like N.D. Tiwari, Arjun Singh, Jagannath Mishra and Madhavrao Scindia from the Hindi belt. Sharad Pawar and Madhavsinh Solanki from the west, and G.K. Moopanar, Kumaramangalam and K. Karunakaran from the south, may come into their own and in time prove to be national leadership material. There would be a democratic correctness in such a flowering. In the time of its worst trauma and trial, the Congress(I) may just, instead of coming apart at the seams, witness an overdue maturing.

-PRABHU CHAWLA

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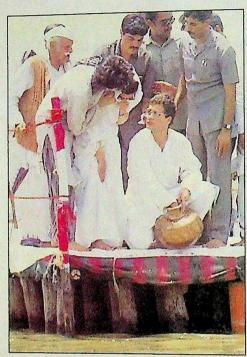
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## AN EMOTIONAL FAREWELL

T was almost surreal, this final journey, a serene and emotionally draped epitaph for a departed leader. As the white railway carriage wound its way through the heart of India to the confluence of India's hollest rivers, it was as if an entire nation had willed it to be this way. Organisation, emotion and ritual met in a careful confluence to produce a fitting final tribute. Along its 1,000-km route, the crowds waited patiently for a glimpse of the sacred urn and the family that had won the hearts of millions with their dignified demeanour in the face of a soul-shattering tragedy.

At all the stations dotting the journey to Allahabad, crowds of mourners surged forth from all corners. In an atmosphere charged with emotion and grief, youths refused to let the train move, clinging desperately to the



olographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Crowds throng the special train; and (top) Rahul performs the last rites

For the Nehru family, a traditional farewell at Allahabad.

carriage in which Sonia sat with Rahul and Priyanka.

At most places, the turn-out was spontaneous. The crowd's sympathy was so transparently sincere that even the normally aloof Sonia acknowledged their sympathy with a small nod or namaste. Rahul and Priyanka knew instinctively what gestures the occasion required They knelt down in the compartment with folded hands so that their faces could be seen.

The train reached Amethiat around 3.30 in the morning. A mass of people waited patiently. determined to give a sentimental farewell to the man they had voted for and been proud of.

At Allahabad, the ancestral home of generations of Nehrus and Gandhis, people lined both sides of the road. At Anand Bhavan, elderly members of the Nehru clan recalled anecdotes from Rajiv's boyhood. The stately mansion, filled with perhaps too much history and too many memories, now had to receive the ashes of yet another family member. The route Sonia and her children took to the sangam was a familiar one for the Nehru family. Every time a member of their line died, the would take a boat from below the imposing fort built by Emperor Akbar and make the melanchof journey to the confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati.

In a simple ceremony lasting barely five minutes, Sonia and the other mourners mounted the specially built platform where Rahul performed the final rited immersing his father's ashes, A the motor boat taking them back to Anand Bhavan picked speed, Sonia and the children instinctively dipped their hands in the water before turning their heads to face the shore—and a —BHASKAR ROY future without Rajiv.

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## SYMPATHY FACTOR

RAJIV Gandhi has gone. His death now looms large over the election scene. Politics has now shifted from issues to the sympathy factor. It is now the Congress(I)'s Rajiv card versus the Bjp's Ram and the National Front's Mandal cards. If the sympathy factor works, the Congress(I) will gain dramatically. But will there be a sympathy wave for the Congress(1)?

There cannot be a logical clue to an emotional phenomenon like sympathy. Still, indicators are that the gruesome murder of Rajiv Gandhi has moved even the most bitter of Congress(1) opponents. The reason: Rajiv was not an ordinary politician. He represented the Nehru-Gandhis, the modern Mughals. And in a largely feudal society, where dynasties do matter, Rajiv's death is not an ordinary event. It sends signals of insecurity to the common man who largely reacts on emotions rather than on logic. Will the common man again react in a way that will build up a sympathy wave for the Congress(I) like in 1984? Opinions differ this time. Congress(I) leaders exude confidence and claim: "Rajivji's sacrifice will not go waste." Opposition leaders, however, argue that there may be sympathy but there should be some one to receive it.

Rajiv's death has also led to a sort of subterranean introspection about the growing cult of violence in the country's politics. The mood is now sombre. The urge is to get away from tension and violence. The Congress(I) has decided to play up this sentiment in a subtle way by attacking the National Front's "politics of divisiveness" and the BJP's "politics of communalism" during is campaign ahead.

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mined to The Congress(I) will go for a very aggressive campaign in the swever, t south where the elections have to be held in over 100 of the 304 rer the parliamentary seats. In Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Orissa and the Brah in parts of Gujarat where both Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv used to And th popular, a sympathy surge for the party may yet be generated T going may still be tough for it in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar where Ram and Mandal campaigns have already sunk into the people minds. But the women and the rural folk even in these areas a bong was likely to fall prey to emotions.

Fearing the sympathy factor, every party is re-drafting that AKA election strategy (see Non-Congress Fronts). "The focus meled: 1. Ir may be on national unity and integrity." points out Margaret Alass (1) can of the Congress(I). Hindi posters with Rajiv's smiling face in the reager in border with the slogan "Maa bete ka yeh balidan, yaad karen mind Hindustan" (India will remember the sacrifices of the mother the son) will be used extensively. Cassettes of Rajiv's spect Aligarh where he is reported to have talked about his owndeath Indira Gandhi's famous Orissa speech will be played.

Reports from the states suggest the sympathy is building most places. A lot will now depend on the Congress(1) leaders they can handle emotions, Rajiv Gandhi dead may bring morest to the party than Rajiv Gandhi alive.

### THE NORTH

### A trickle but not a wave

MADHYA PRADESH-Polled: 28; pending: 12. There was just a whiff of sympathy for the rudderless Congress(I) after Rajiv's violent murder. But much will depend on how the party leaders carry their campaign and on the extent of involvement in it of Rajiv's family members. The party circles were, however, pleased over P.V. Narasimha Rao taking over as party president as it would wipe out the influence of the coterie surrounding the Gandhi family and lead the way for ushering in intra-party democracy.

During the bandh following Rajiv's death, houses and businesses of BJP supporters became a target of public fury. The party's election material was also destroyed in many places, forcing it to become defensive. Said Chief Minister Sunderlal Patwa: "The attempts of the Congress(I) to extract political mileage out of the assassination will not succeed.'

In a state where the Congress(I) needs only a 5-per cent swing to turn the tide in its favour, a possible sympathy vote is worrying BJP leaders especially as they can't lash out with anti-Rajiv propaganda. Said Congress(I) leader Indira Iyengar: "The BJP will be hard put to answer the charge that it propagated a cult of violence and hatred in the country."

Fortunately for the BJP, polling has already taken place in its traditional stronghold, the Madhya Bharat region. The

Congress(I) is already well-entrenched in the Chhatissa and Mahakoshal regions. The sympathy factor may impro its chances in areas like Dhar, Mandasaur and Durg where BJP is a tough contender.

RAJASTHAN—Polled: 15; pending: 10, A sympton wave in favour of the Congress(I), similar to the one in 198 sweeping across the state and could help the party win ms the 10 seats in the Udaipur and Jodhpur divisions for N polls are to be held. While the Jodhpur division, which has seats, is considered a traditional Congress(I) strong Udaipur has always been a powerful base for the BIP. indicators of the sympathy wave were the spontaneous all over the state and the irate crowds pulling down BIPPE and cut-outs at several places. The Congress(I) leader H Joshi reflected the party's confidence when he said: "Na sacrifice will not go waste." All this portends ill for the which had recovered as the final phis which had recovered part of its lost ground in the final pho campaigning.

UTTAR PRADESH—Polled: 42; pending: 40; termanded: 2 termanded: 3. As a tragedy-struck Congress(1) electioneering for the second round of elections for the Sabha and 125 years Sabha and 125 Vidhan Sabha seats, party leaders brimming with confidence. Fortunately for the party seats are in March seats are in Muslim-dominated Ruhelkhand region of eastern control of eastern, central and western Uttar Pradesh, all 819 570 where the sympathy factor will have an impact.

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campaign in the sympathy factor, it will only Orissa and may the Brahmin voters switch from the BJP to the Con-Rajiv used to all And the Janata Dal would emerge strong as a result.

### THE SOUTH

these areas a prong wave in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh

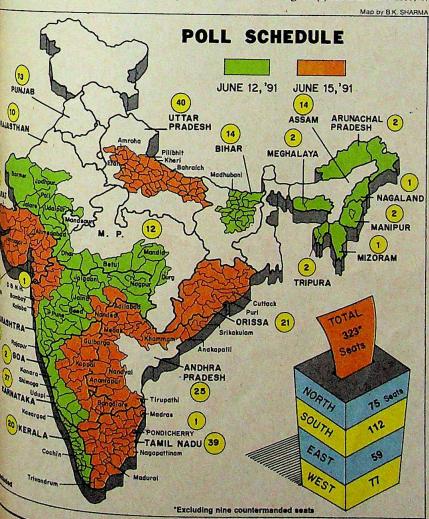
s re-drafting aNATAKA—Polled: nil; pending: 27; counter-"The focus revied: 1. In the absence of a clear successor to Rajiv, the anarous of the sympathy factor to work here. In fact in the removed Veerendra Patil is fresh and sympathy minds. The Lingayat community in northern of the mothers. Karnataka may not be moved by the former prime minister's death. The BJP is likely to gain in the coastal areas. Though the Congress(I) won 27 out of 28 seats in 1989, this time it is in for a set-back. It will desperately need a sympathy vote to win 20 seats or more this time. The choice of Narasimha Rao may not help because he isn't rated very highly in the state party circles.

ANDHRA PRADESH—Polled: 17; pending 25. Mrs Gandhi's brutal killing failed to shore up the Congress(I)'s chances in the 1984 polls. But in the aftermath of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, the emotive factor will work effectively in the state. The choice of Narasimha Rao will not boost the party's prospects. Though Rao belongs to Andhra Pradesh and has been the chief minister he doesn't have much clout in the state. Even Telugu Desam leaders are willing to concede that the Congress(I) has the advantage. And though Telugu Desam supremo N.T. Rama Rao has cried himself hoarse about the attacks on the properties of his party members in the violence that followed Rajiv's assassination, it is unlikely to make a dent in the Congress(I)'s chances in northern Telangana, the Rayalaseema region and the north coastal districts that are yet to go to the polls.

**TAMIL NADU—Polled: nil; pending: 39.** Here, where the assassination took place and memories of the brutal killing are still raw, the party is going to ride the sympathy wave. The Congress(I)-AIADMK alliance, which was set to sweep all 39

Lok Sabha seats, is now even likely to improve significantly in the assembly polls. With the LTTE's hand suspected in Rajiv's assassination, the Congress(I) can hope to cash in on the people's anger against the DMK's pro-LTTE politics. Though Sonia is the favoured candidate for the party leadership, even Narasimha Rao is welcome. Rao is also seen as a non-controversial person enjoying a fine rapport with the party leaders in the state.

KERALA-Polled: nil; pending: 20. There will certainly be a current in favour of the Congress(I)led United Democratic Front in the wake of the assassination. It will work better if Narasimha Rao is made the party president. Congress(I) sources figure there will be a sympathy wave as there was a bandh in the state on the funeral day even though the PCC(1) hadn't called for it. But the LDF isn't worried and Chief Minister E.K. Nayanar is sure that the party will not suffer poll reversals.



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### THE EAST

### Only Orissa and the north-east affected

ORISSA-Polled: nil; pending: 21. Rajiv's tragic end will come to the Congress(I)'s rescue. If the spontaneous bandhs in over a dozen towns are anything to go by, the coming elections may as well witness a repeat of 1984 when even a discredited government of J.B. Patnaik was swept back to power. Of the 21 parliamentary seats here, the Congress(I) had a fighting chance in about eight or nine. But now even in 'marginal' seats like Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Sambalpur and Puri, the odds are in its favour. In fact, even Narasimha Rao as party president will in no way dampen the sympathy factor.

### BIHAR—Polled: 36; pending: 14; countermanded:

4. Rajiv's death instead of helping the Congress(I) has eroded the party's prospects in the state because, unlike in

NORTH-EAST-Total: 11; still to go to the polls: 10, Rajiv's killing will help the Congress(I) maintain its gripover the 10 seats it bagged here in 1989. Both the tribals and the non-tribals returned Rajiv's love for the region. In the one seat each in Meghalaya, Tripura and Manipur, where the Congress(I) chips were down, there has been a sea change,

### THE WEST

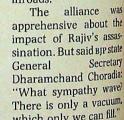
### The tragedy makes no discernible difference

MAHARASHTRA-Polled: nil; pending: 48. Even before Rajiv Gandhi was cremated the question in this state was: would there be a repeat of the 1984 sympathy wave This, of course, will only become known after campaigning has resumed. Yet in constituencies where Congress() stalwarts like Murli Deora and V.N. Gadgil are locked in combat with BJP candidates, even a small favourable swing

will guarantee their victories. Elsewhere, the sugar belt of western Maharashtra has always been a Congress(I) stronghold, so the only gains from sympathy the party can expect will be in the Vidarbha, Marathwada and Konkan regions where the BIP-Shiv Sena alliance has been making inroads.

alliance was The apprehensive about the impact of Rajiv's assassination. But said BJP state Secretary General Dharamchand Choradia: "What sympathy wave? There is only a vacuum, which only we can fill."

Certainly Chief Minis-



ter Sharad Pawar has emerged stronger. Gadgil and other dissidents who opposed him are no longer assured of the high command's support now

ALMC

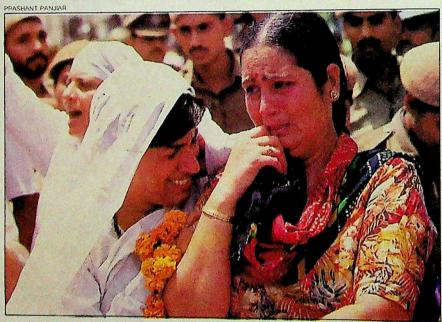
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HEAL

that Rajiv is gone. Even if Narasimha Rao takes over the leadership, in the state Pawar would be calling the shots

GUJARAT—Polled: nil; pending: 25; counter manded: 1. A Congress(I) sweep is not on the cards Though the state observed a bandh, the reaction to Rajiv's assassination was muted. Besides, the voter, swayed by the BJP's Hindutva campaign, is unlikely to change his minding hurry. The sympathy factor may have a marginal impaction constituencies where the Congress(I)-Janata Dal(G) are locked in close contests with the BJP.

While the Congress(I) was hoping the poor and the men would now women would now gravitate towards them, the BP Swith reshaped its poll strategy. "A stable Centre capable of curbing terrorism" curbing terrorism" will be its main plank. And that the country is not season country is not secure in a leaderless Congress(I)'s hands But the BIP is now bore a leaderless Congress(I)'s hands But the BIP is now bore a leaderless Congress(I)'s hands But the BIP is now bore a leaderless Congress(I)'s hands But the BIP is now bore a leaderless Congress(I)'s hands But the BIP is now bore a leaderless Congress(I)'s hands But the BIP is now bore a leaderless Congress(I)'s hands But the BIP is now bore a leaderless Congress(I)'s hands But the BIP is now bore a leaderless Congress(I)'s hands But the BIP is now bore a leaderless Congress(I)'s hands But the BIP is now bore a leaderless Congress(I)'s hands But the BIP is now bore a leaderless Congress(I)'s hands But the BIP is now bore a leaderless Congress(I)'s hands But the BIP is now bore a leaderless Congress(I)'s hands But the BIP is now bore a leaderless Congress(I)'s hands But the BIP is now bore a leaderless Congress(I)'s hands But the BIP is now bore a leaderless Congress(I)'s hands But the BIP is now bore a leaderless Congress(I)'s hands But the BIP is now bore a leaderless Congress(I)'s hands But the BIP is now bore a leaderless Congress Congress(I)'s hands But the BIP is now bore a leaderless Congress Cong the BJP is now bereft of an extra weapon that Sould's induction as Conserved in the Sould's induction as Conserved in the sould be sould b induction as Congress(I) president would have provided it.



Women mourning the death of Rajiv Gandhi

### The assassination is expected to sway the women and rural voters.

1984, there is nobody to rally around now. The choice of Narasimha Rao, a Brahmin, as president, may be a drawback in a backwards-majority state. The backwards continue to identify with the Janata Dal. However, the Congress(I) stands to gain where the BJP had an edge before. Moreover, sympathy votes can only come from the forwards, the BJP vote bank.

ASSAM—Polled: nil; pending: 14. There is not even a ripple of sympathy here. Even as Rajiv was being cremated, the AASU was demonstrating against the clamping of the National Security Act on the state. Earlier, the Congress(I) had hoped to stage a come-back aiming at half of the 125 assembly and 14 Lok Sabha seats by getting leverage from the AGP split. Though the Congress(I) could very well cash in on the reported link between the outlawed ULFA and the LITE (which is suspected to be behind Rajiv's killing), it wouldn't dare to do so for fear of antagonising the Assamese people.

112 INDIA TODAY . JUNE 15, 1991

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## SHIFTING STRATEGIES

SHOCK, plain and simple. This was the first reaction. Then reality caught up, of a Congress(1) without Rajiv Gandhi, and a political arena bereft of a potential prime minister. The tragic exit created a pre-election vacuum. Almost. A feeling surged that Rajiv's death could tilt the balance in the Congress(1)'s favour as it did in 1984 after Indira Gandhi's assassination.

But as the rival BJP, the National Front-Left combine, and the Samajwadi Janata Party (SJP). were hoping this many not happen, as the polling for the remaining 306 Lok Sabha seals has been postponed till mid-June.

The BJP has already seized the opportunity, and has added the stability factor to Ram, roti and insaaf. The National Front-Left combine is confident about Mandal magic, and the SJP is hopingle play a strategic role in case no party has a majority.

These are assumptions and the parties are aware of it. But they have reshaped election strategies on these lines.

THE BJP

### STABILITY TACK

TERVOUS at the prospect of Rajiv defeating Ram in the next round of elections, the BJP is counting on a divided Congress(I) leadership and a modified campaign pitch. And despite brave assertions of sweeping the polls, the BJP is concerned enough about a Rajiv sympathy wave to make some quick changes in its poll strategy.

It has decided to delete all references to Rajiv Gandhi and his-alleged misdeeds from election propaganda. Explains former party president L.K. Advani: "Now Rajiv will not figure. Instead, the focus will be on the Congress and its stewardship of the country." In Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra in particular, the BJP will project itself as the only stable national party, with a disciplined cadre and a galaxy of leaders who can, says party President Murli Manohar Joshi, "safeguard democ-

### **NEW MOVES**

- Delete Rajiv references; focus on Congress' lack of leadership.
- Project BJP as the only stable party.
- Reduce antiminority tirade.

itorodo



Atal Behari Vajpayee, Murli Manohar Joshi and L.K. Advani at a party meeting: looking for advantage

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racy, maintain law and order." The logic is to ignore the anti-вр segment and, instead, woo those who don't look at the вр as an all-India party. Says Advani: "Those who preferred Rajiv to Vajpayee will now come to us."

There will also be talk of the price the country has to pay for the Congress(I)'s dalliance with the LTTE—though how this can be done without mentioning Rajiv isn't clear—and how the BJP was the first, as party leaders claim, to protest the

Tigers' presence in Tamil Nadu.

Next, the BJP's national executive has quietly decided to project senior party leader Atal Behari Vajpayee as the Muslim vote man. He will travel country-wide to directly sweet-talk the Muslim electorate. This move ties in with orders that have already gone out to the cadres: tone down the anti-minority invective. Plus, try to withdraw offensive tapes from circulation and shrug off any links with diehard pro-Hinduists such as Sadhvi Rithambara by dismissing them as "VHP and not BJP workers". Another tack: claim the BJP is not anti-Muslim by highlighting Advani and Vajpayee's meeting with Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and opposition leader Benazir Bhutto when they were

in India to attend Rajiv's funeral. And, as Advani is already doing, trumpet the fact that Pakistan's foreign minister feels the relations between the two countries peaked when Vajpayee was the external affairs minister.

None of this means that the party will soften its promise of ushering in Ram Rajya, particularly in the Hindi heartland. Ayodhya will continue to be projected as practically the centre of the universe and the party as the projector of Indian values the way Lord Ram symbolises them.

Had Sonia Gandhi agreed to head the Congress(I), the BJP, say insiders, would in all probability have launched venomous propaganda against this "foreign woman" portraying her as the anti-thesis of Indian values. And all documentary evidence gathered by Arun Jaitley, former additional solicitor general and a senior member of the BJP national executive, on Sonia's Italian relatives allegedly bagging contracts would have been made public to defame her and the Congress(I). Now, the BJP hopes to win even without thrashing Sonia, by saying that a party without an ideology is now without a leader.

-SHAHNAZ ANKLESARIA AIYAR

JANATA DAL

### SHOWING NERVES

T is a bolt from the blue." That was V.P. Singh's immediate reaction to Rajiv's assassination. Apart from shock, the statement suggested that lightning could strike the National Front-Left combine's election hopes in the form of a pro-Congress(I) sympathy wave.

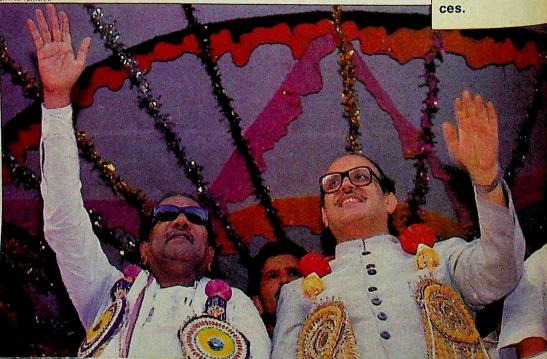
Expectedly, partymen deny it. Says S. Jaipal Reddy, Janata Dal spokesman: "We do not believe the sympathy factor will work." Yet the allies got together for a strategy-huddle a day after Rajiv's death and again on May 24 to

discuss the implications of the revised election schedule.

Clearly, the party is nervous. The combine is contesting directly with the Congress(I) for most of the 306 Lok Sabha constituencies going to the polls. This could be crucial in the south where the BJP isn't much of a factor and there are excellent pros-

### NEW STRATEGIES

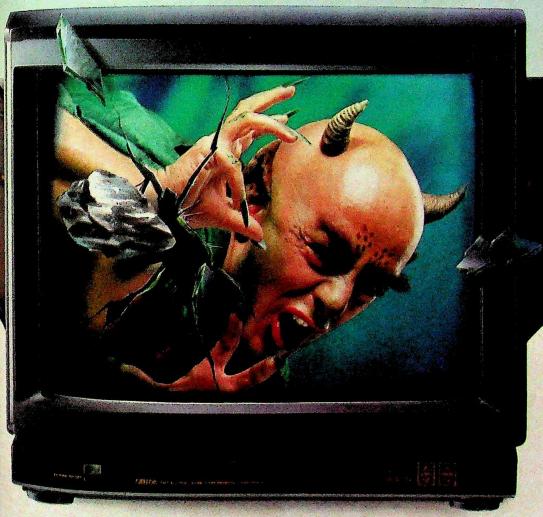
- Stress the Congress(I)'s inability to select a leader.
- Focus on Mandal and Masjid.
- Post-poll realignment of forces.



Karunanidhi and V.P. Singh at a DMK rally in Tamil Nadu: dimmed hopes

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pects for a sympathy factor swing. For one, Rajiv died in Tamil Nadu. For another, the south has usually been pro-Congress(I). Besides, the National Front is dependent on its regional allies, the DMK in Tamil Nadu, the Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh and the Left Democratic Front in Kerala, all perceived as anti-Congress(I) and anti-Rajiv.

The combine could take the worst beating in Tamil Nadu. DMK chieftain M. Karunanidhi's open association with the LTTE could seal the party's fate in the state which, even before Rajiv's death, appeared to have thrown in its lot with the Congress(I)-AIADMK alliance. The dice seems to be loaded the Congress(I) way in Kerala and Karnataka too. The southern wave could spread to Orissa, crumbling Janata Dal heavyweight Biju Patnaik's bastion.

On the plus side, there is a feeling within the National Front-Left combine that it will fare better in the north. The reason: in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar the fight is between the Janata Dal's Mandal plank and the BJP's Ram card. Not everybody agrees though. Says CPI leader M. Farooqi: "If it is a (Congress) sympathy wave, it will be a wave all over."

To prevent this the Janata Dal's new poll pitch will be the "non-democratic functioning of the Congress(I)", says a senior leader, citing the Congress(I)'s inability to decide on Rajiv's successor. The Janata Dal will continue to harp on Mandal, masjid, and Ambedkar for the backward votes. The combine also speaks of a "realignment of centrist forces" after the polls. But the BJP remains taboo.

The best the combine has going for it is the hope that the electorate overlooks the fact that it is as faction-ridden as the Congress(I) and that the V.P. Singh charisma works the second time around. To the Raja, that may well seem like a bolt, as he says, from the blue.

—ZAFAR AGHA

THE SJP

# MERGER MOVES

HEN the Samajwadi Janata Party (SJP) and the Orgress(I) fell out with each other barely three mon ago, it seemed there could be no going back. But politics, there are no untouchables. And when Rajiv Gand assassination forced a hasty electoral rethinking, consent in the SJP veered around for a merger with the Congress Says party leader, Subramanian Swamy: "If the Congress continue get a majority, the SJP should align with it."

The rationale is threefold: piggyback to power on larger Congress(I) strength: play the crucial role of priminister-maker; and keep the Left and BJP at bay. So strong the fear of the BJP coming to power that some SJP leaders ready to sacrifice their earlier plan of projecting Chan Shekhar as president of a Congress(I)-SJP coalition, and even willing to patch up with the Janata Dal. The premise that the Congress(I) will not sweep back to power or sympathy wave but will get a maximum of 240 seats in the Sabha, short of a working majority. In this scenario, if Congress(I) would need outside support to form a government and the SJP could fill that gap.

Soon after news of Rajiv's death broke, some splead wanted a tie-up with the Congress(I). They were even will to retire many of their candidates in favour of Congres aspirants. But the idea was dropped when leaders like Swa opposed it, categorically stating it would not be practically specially stating it would not be practically specially specially stating it would not be practically specially specially stating it would not be practically specially specially specially stating it would not be practically specially specia

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PRASHANT PANJIAR STRATEGIES

> Forge a postpoll alliance with the Congress(I).

Keep the Left and BJP at bay.

Devi Lal and Chautala to maintain low profile.

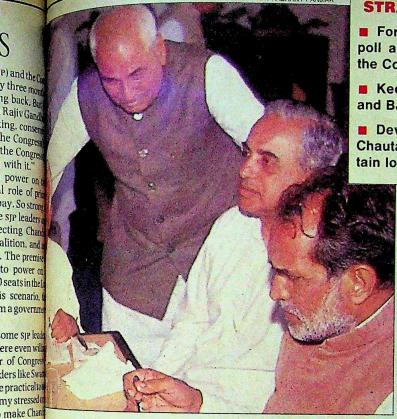
needs him as prime minister for another five years".

But given the strong anti-Devi Lal. Om Prakash Chautala sentiments in the Congress(I), will it be inclined to accept the sjp? While the sjp rank and file, say insiders, will have no qualms in dumping the duo, for Chandra Shekhar it

may not be that easy given his penchant for strong personal friendships. Chandra Shekhar's apologists say Haryana strongman Chautala has been tamed to some extent: "If he can be convinced to drop out of the polls, he could also be persuaded to keep a low profile.'

For the sp, alliance hopes were revived when Sonia declined to head the Congress(I). At one point, Congress(I) heavyweight Sharad Pawar suggested Chandra Shekhar as a candidate. But the proposal failed to materialise. Now, spr leaders are amenable to begin talks once the Congress(I) leadership issue is resolved. Whether the Congress(I) will be as eager remains the crucial question.

-W.P.S. SIDHU



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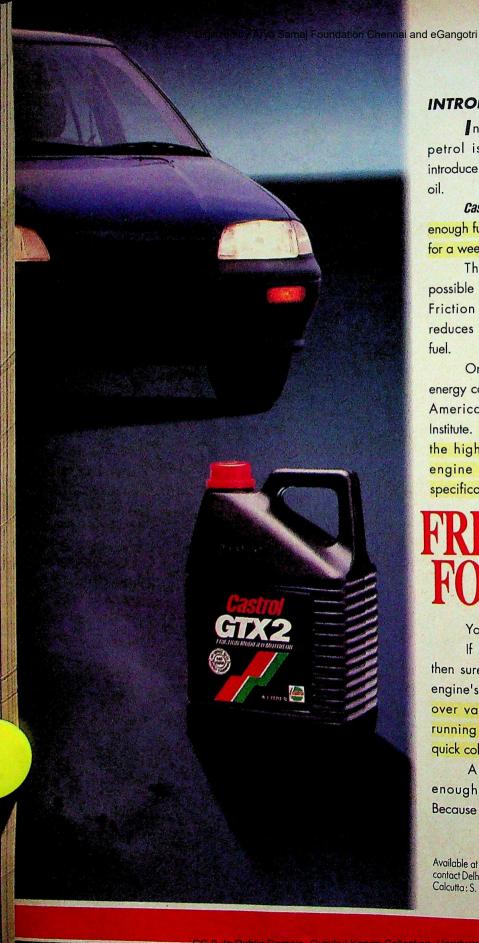
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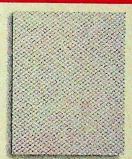
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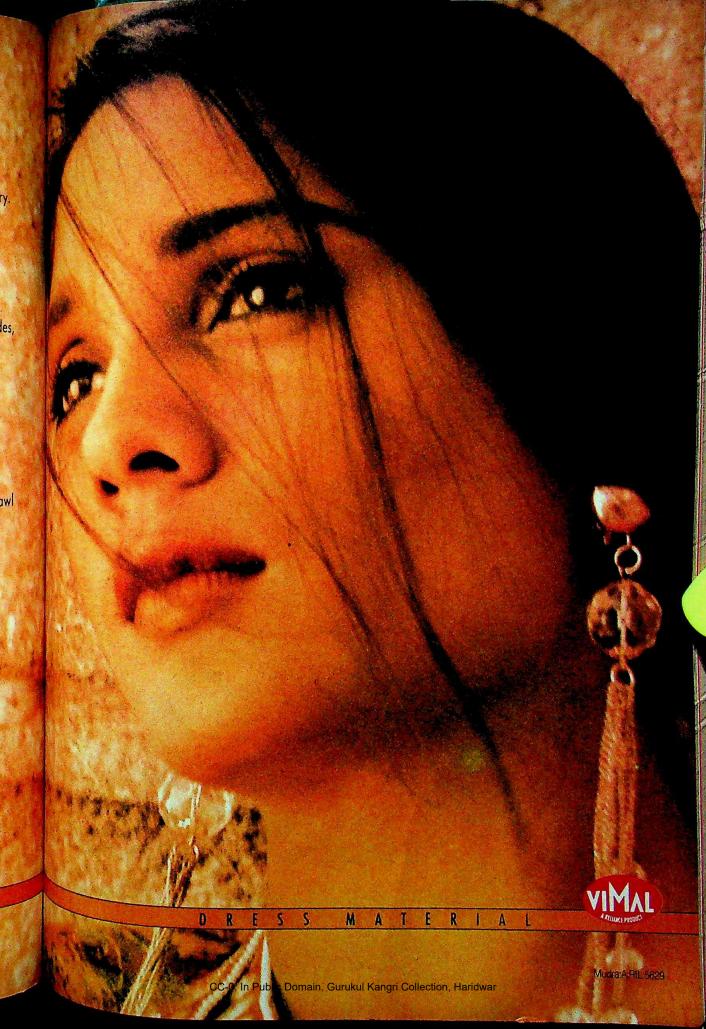
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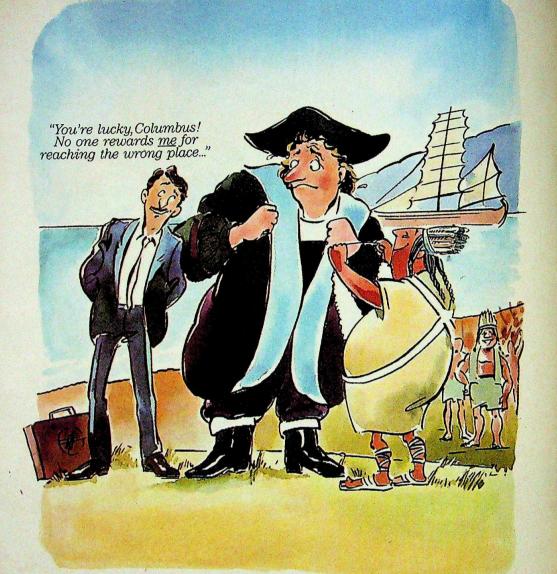




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# THE POLL CONTROVERSY

RISIS moments that push others into tight-corners seem to be opportune moments for the aggressive, Ushooting-from-the-hip Chief Election Commissioner (N. Seshan. While the country was yet to recover from the or Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, Seshan plunged, much aplomb it seemed, yet again into controversy by scheduling the remaining two days of polling to June 12 adi5instead of the initially scheduled May 23 and 26. This and quite surprisingly, the aggrieved party seemed to whe Congress(I).

The first phase of the polling completed on May 20 saw

Mespread violence in differstparts of the country reing in the death of over 50 mple. The poll violence was mymuch under control beasse of the extensive meataken by the commisin anticipating trouble. commission in its exbustive pre-poll surveys had intified the violence-prone instituencies, and had deloyed security forces in condation with the state govaments. And because of the wive deployment for elecaduty, the reserves of seaty forces available with the Central as well as the state governments were down to the minimum. So, beside the question of propriety of continuing with the election during the seven-day period of national mourning, there was also the crucial and real problem of coping with the law and order arising from the uncertain situation following the assassination.

Barely had Seshan announced the new dates on May 22 that the country returned to its habitually cantankerous election mood with complaints flying in the air about the manner in which the decision was taken. All of the political parties promptly declared their dissatisfaction. It did not

Photographs by PRAMOD PUSI KARNA

help matters that it was the irrepressible Seshan who was fielding the flak. The aggressive personality of the chief election commissioner, with its apparent overtones of partisanship, seemed to come in the way of objective assessment of the decision taken to put off the elections.

The decision was apparently taken after Seshan had extensive discussions with President R. Venkataraman at Rashtrapati Bhayan in the presence of Cabinet Secretary Naresh Chandra. According to reports Seshan had already



## THE KEY POINTS OF DEBATE

CHIEF Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan creates tompoversy by rushing in where his predecessors feared to tread, Like a He-Man he has waved the constitutional sword od the masters of the political universe whenever questioned and shouted: "I have the power." Here are five decisions that halding in the headlines in the run-up to the general elections:

he neki: the petition against the BJP about misuse of its symbol before at bathefore the elections, and further angered the party by bling that third parties can be heard in the matter of vehement registration of a political party. In the face of vehement Rolests, he put off the hearings.

ransfer of Officials: At least five state governwere pulled up by the zealous Seshan for largescale transfer of officials before elections in violation of the spirit of model code of conduct.

LPG and Phone Connections: He took exception to Central min-

isters issuing out-of-turn gas and phone connections. It evoked angry protests from the piqued ministers, with the prime minister having had to intervene to calm the tempers of his ministerial colleagues.

Bihar Law and Order Situation: Seshan raised the spectre of putting off polls in Bihar citing law and order problems, which evoked allegations that he was trying to ruin the National Front's prospects. He allowed the polling schedule to remain as planned.

Countermanding Elections: Citing mass rigging Seshan countermanded elections in five constituencies in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, including Patna from where former foreign minister I.K. Gujral was contesting. The National Front called the decision partisan saying a repoll order would have sufficed. -ALOK TIWARI

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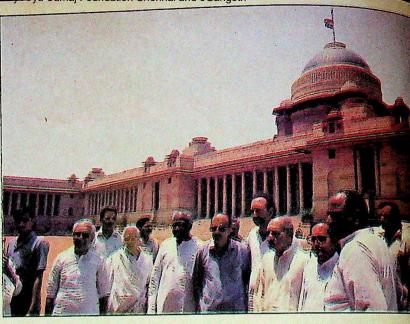
**Lufthansa Cargo** 

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appeared to have made up his mind about putting off the polls beyond elections in Assam, due on June 6 and 8. On this issue he seemed to have had a serious difference of opinion with Naresh Chandra, even amounting to a scrap. Chandra's perception of the situation led him to the view that the elections could be held at a much earlier date.

There was another meeting at Rashtrapati Bhavan in the small hours of May 22 between Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, who drove straight there after returning to Delhi at 2 a.m., Law Minister Subramanian Swamy and the President. They were later joined by Seshan and Chandra. The decision to have a sevenday mourning period also

appears to have been taken at this top-level meeting. According to Swamy, law and order was the prime consideration before everyone. The mood of violence in the air could be gauged from the behaviour of the crowd outside 10.



The Congress(1) delegation after meeting President R. Venkataraman

The party too was not happy with the three-week postponemen

sed the ma lanpath, which blocked the President's car when he al the po there to offer his condolences to Sonia Gandhi. Then the happy apprehension in those early hours as to what shap Hindu w reaction to Rajiv's death would take.

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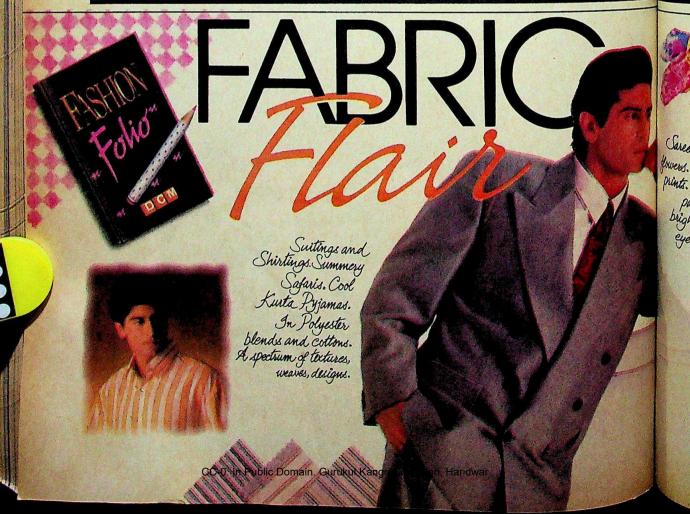
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analysis that emerged in the meeting, Swamy, says, bllows: if the elections were to be held around May 31, Blust after the mourning period, it would have left too for moving the Central security forces to Assam to ling is scheduled on June 6 and 8. Elections in Assam to be put off because the monsoon reaches there early. plane 12 and 15 were the earliest possible dates on polling could be held taking into account the time for moving the forces out of Assam for deployment

sels some merit in the analysis. According to a senior Mistry official, polling could be held without difficulty phases beyond May 31 without disturbing the Assam in he said. 29. "But it was not possible to defer the second and

The decision to put off polling by three weeks still merated heat with the abrasive Seshan being as much letarget of flak as the merit of the decision. He took the mand announced it on television without any further bations with either the leaders of the political parties or enior officials. The new House, which was to be medby June 5, will now be constituted only by June 18. risttocry foul were the leaders of the non-Congress(I) alparties. "We regret to note we were not taken into more about this decision," complained Janata Dalsons. Jaipal Reddy, "It is a bad precedent." The BJP also adthemanner in which the decision was taken. It also car when he at the polling scheduled for June 12 to be changed Gandhi. That ceit happened to be amavasya (new moon day) when o what shape Hindu women fast.

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kstates also got worried at the prospect of keeping police

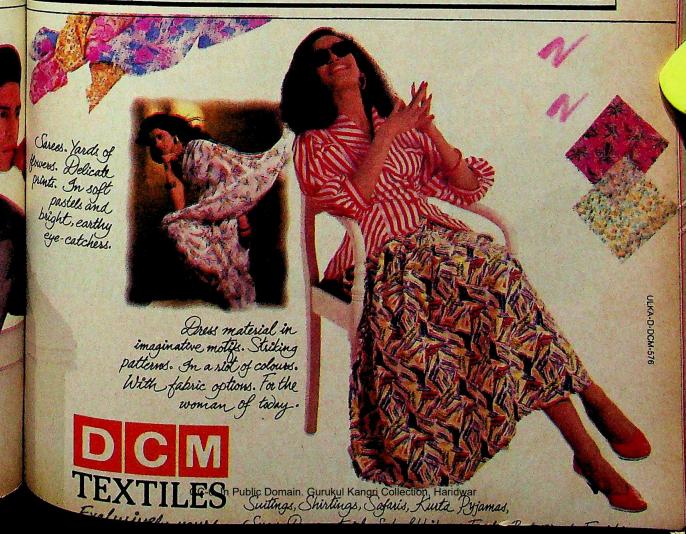
personnel deployed in remote areas for three more weeks. The possible onset of the monsoon in the first week of June only made the worries worse. Coastal states like Gujarat, Goa, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Orissa expressed their misgivings and wanted the polling dates to be advanced. Critics, remembering Seshan's alleged proximity to the Congress(I), immediately suspected polling was postponed by three weeks just to help the party recover from this shock.

As it turned out, the Congress(I) was the only party that was uncomfortable with the dates. General Secretary Ghulam Nabi Azad wrote to Seshan asking for the polling dates to be advanced, clearly worried that the 'sympathy factor' might weaken in the three intervening weeks, something that the party would like to take maximum advantage of. Others, predictably, took the opposite view. A delegation of the National Front-Left Front combine met the election commissioner to plead that the dates should not be changed. Orissa Chief Minister Biju Patnaik, who had wanted the dates to be advanced, quickly changed stance and joined the NF delegation to plead for just the opposite.

The BJP also wanted the new dates to remain. Said its President Murli Manohar Joshi: "It will be a mockery of the elections if the dates are changed now."

Seshan appeared to be going along when suddenly, over May 25-26 weekend, he hinted that the new polling dates might be changed yet again. He is understood to have told a delegation of Congress(I) chief ministers that he would decide on their request for an advancement of dates soon. If indeed he does give in to the Congress(I) demand, it will mean yet another controversy for the man who seems to be revelling in them.

-ALOK TIWARI



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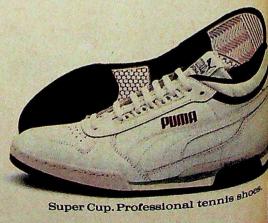
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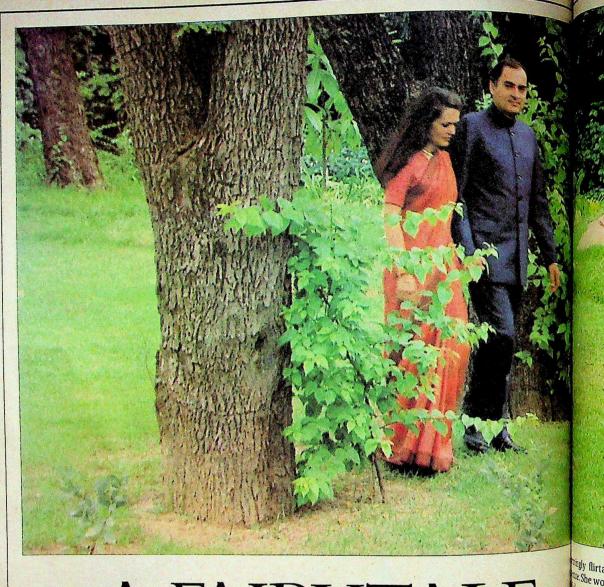


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# A FAIRYTALE ROMANCE

T was a replay of Erich Segal's Love Story with an equally tragic, poignant ending. The difference is that it lasted 23 years. And, there are two grown, lovely, well-behaved children to show for it, despite a security-related artificial, gilded-cage existence.

It seems unreal and touching that couples married for so long, specially those who have scaled dizzy heights, should be so obviously devoted to each other. But if Rajiv Gandhi had not been so cruelly cut down by an assassin in the prime of his life, he would undoubtedly have continued to surreptitiously hold hands with wife Sonia in public, more openly at private parties, or while travelling in a helicopter.

In a sense, Charles Antoni, the Greek restaurante Cambridge University, where Rajiv first set eyes on instantly fell in love, predicted it. Rajiv had persuada to seat him close to the lovely Italian girl so that he know her. And like a good Greek businessman, Ansuggested the charge might be double for that prins suggested the charge might be double for that prins for the charge might be double for that prins Garante in a film on Rajiv by Simi Garante in a film on Raj

The love story continued till the very end. Reconstantly praise his wife in public and call her beautiful woman I know". And there seems little beautiful was the only woman in his life, although her seems little beautiful was the only woman in his life.

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The love story continued till the very end. Rajiv constantly praised his wife calling her "the most beautiful woman I know". He was demonstratively affectionate, often holding hands. No doubt Sonia was the only woman in his life.

engineer and a music buff. During the great musical divide of the '60s, Rajiv preferred the Rolling Stones to the Beatles. Otherwise it was Stan Getz, John Coltrane, Wynton Marsalis and other modern jazz greats. For an upper middle class young man not consumed by ambition-what the Americans would describe as a "regular guy"—it was an ideal existence.

It was for the somewhat misunderstood Sonja too. A shy introverted person who hated the glare and publicity of politics, she was basically a wife and a mother. And that was all she wanted to be. They were a very small, tightly-knit family. Sonia lived for her husband and children.

ONIA was often portrayed as a tough, corrupt, politically ambitious, grasping woman, who used her immense hold over her husband to influence government policies and enrich her relatives in Italy. This was entirely unproven but the couple's closeness to Ottavio Quattrocchi, the local Snamprogetti representative, did become a source of controversy. In the '80s, the Government allegedly favoured the Italian fertiliser multinational and its associates in a spate of fertiliser project contracts. There were also some questionable holidays at the tax payers' expense. Rajiv's friends and Sonia's relatives were ferried in government aircraft to exotic locations like Lakshadweep. Rajiv drew considerable flak on Sonia's Italian connections but remained fiercely protective.

Nevertheless, Sonia refused to project herself, either politically or in local society. She kept everyone, except for a few very old friends, at arm's length, refusing to interact with Rajiv's political, government or business associates. "Sonia made a clear distinction between private and public life," says Mani Shankar Aiyar, a close Rajiv aide. "She never saw herself as part of Rajiv's public life.'

None of Sonia's friends for a moment believed she would accept the presidency of the Congress(I) on Rajiv's death. This was jarringly evident when, sitting besides Rajiv's body at Teen Murti, she angrily rebuked a Naga leader who pleaded with her to accept the cwc request. Friends are equally confident she will remain in India. She has become too Indian to live elsewhere, as she told her grandmother in Italy on the telephone. She firmly believes her destiny is tied up with India.

The misconceptions about Sonia really arose because very few knew much about her. So she remained a complete enigma. She was determined to ensure her home remained private, completely shielded from public view. Close aides like Mani Shankar Aiyar, Sam Pitroda or P. Chidambaram have never been invited into the inner sanctum of the Gandhi home, much less shared a meal at the family table. If they were working late, a hospitable Rajiv would nip into the kitchen and produce some soup and crackers. But that was it.

The fact remains that Sonia never wanted Rajiv to join politics. Indira Gandhi once told an interviewer that her

Irratious with pretty women even in Sonia's She would look at him from the corner of her eye in iproach. Among close friends, he was demonstrably ale, always sitting next to his wife, either holding with his arm around her. So much so that friends bhim as chipkan (clinger). "The first time I saw Sonia I was the girl for me," Rajiv once admitted. "I found straightforward and outspoken, never hiding She is very warm and understanding as a person. thimself was the quintessential family man. The oftcliche that Rajiv Gandhi never set out to be a much less prime minister of India, is all too true. He happy being an airline pilot earning Rs 5.000 a hobby. making a living out of what he considered a hobby. and the first. There was always time for Sonia and the hio game sanctuaries, the mountains, Pushkar or And for playing with his dogs. He would indulge in h for photography and driving at hair-raising or photography and driving at man to he would tinker around with mechanical or

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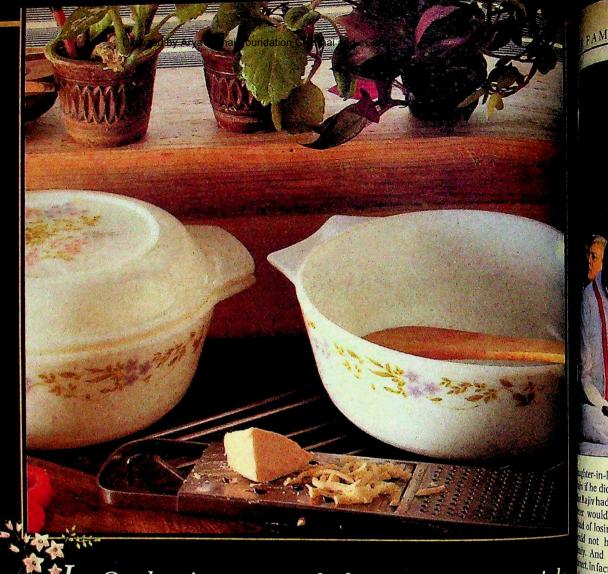
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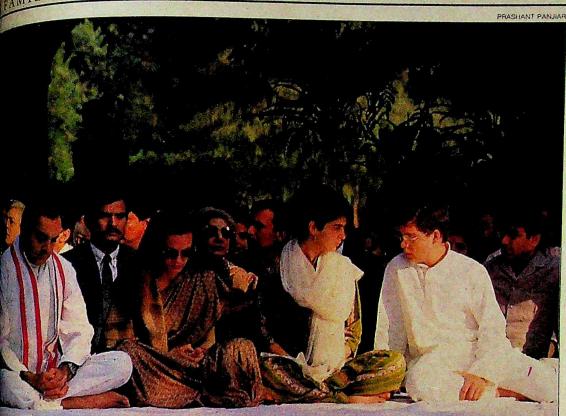
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and refused to dress in her customary elegant the was finally about to make his announce-bewas still crying, begging him to keep his promise.

stally, the young Italian girl had problems adjusting to the avery close relationship with her distinguished shold. Indira Gandhi found in her the daughter she had horing the tough post-Emergency years when Mrs and Sanjay did short spells in prison, Sonia's and commitment became more apparent. So did should down, it was in Sonia's lap that the dead prime land lay cradled as the Ambassador car raced to Medical Sciences while Rajiv was in

Rahul and Priyanka were
the natural inheritors of
their parents' aristocratic
predilections. Well-versed in
the practice of public stoicism,
they were always told to steel
themselves for tragedy and
conduct themselves with
dignity in public.

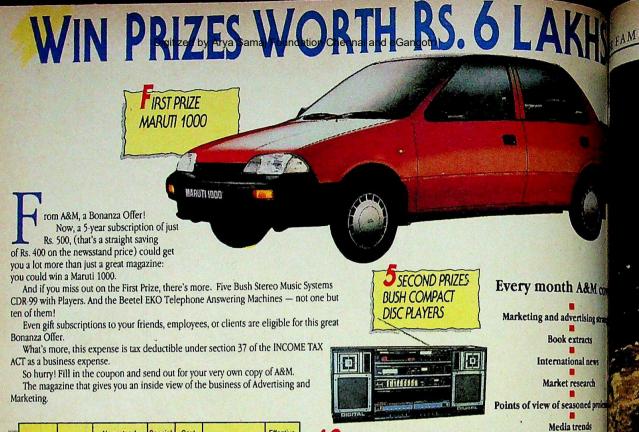
rural West Bengal. Sonia took two years to get over that tragedy. But, as a friend recounts, "that experience developed within her a core of steel".

In whatever he did, Rajiv was a perfectionist, to the point of nitpicking. Anything out of place, a curtain, a drape or pencil, and Rajiv was sure to personally fix it. There is a story about Prince Charles coming home to lunch a few years ago, and a recently-installed painting being out of alignment. Ever the hands-on man, Rajiv got hold of a drill and straightened it himself. But the fresh paint was

smelling unpleasant. And there being no air freshener, he got his expensive after-shave and liberally sprayed the area.

At one level, Rajiv emerged from a technology buffinto a person in search of a vision, revealing boundless energy in campaigning for re-election. But he was simultaneously plagued by self-doubt. He often wondered whether it was worthwhile bringing back to office people in his party with questionable motivations. "What the hell am I campaigning so hard for?" he recently told a friend. "Just to bring back this same bunch of manipulators and office-seekers?" Even his sporadicenjoyment of politics was punctuated with pangs of guilt at having broken his promise to Sonia. "One gets too involved with work and neglects family and home," Rajiv admitted. "We forget wives are persons and human beings and need to be dealt with as such."

Being in the Opposition afforded him the opportunity to spend more time with them, go to their Mehrauli farm and



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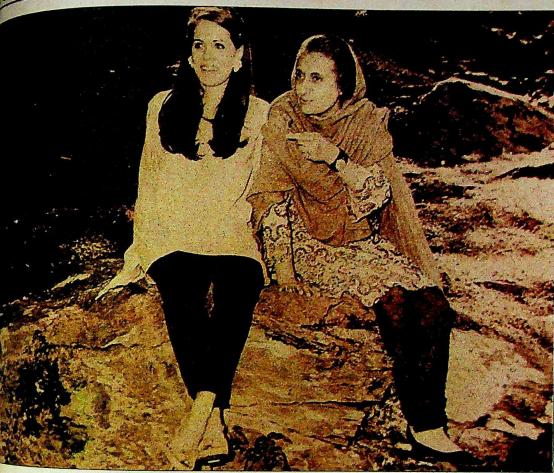
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things normal families such as paying surprise to close friends and deng a cold pitcher of paani. "It was evident Sonia and Rajiv had an ely close, warm and musupportive relationship." anishankar Aiyar. "Rajiv her enormously and look to her for moral rather than advice on Issues. And he was dby the general indication

are were a number of ar-Which Rajiv's thinking Muenced by Sonia, though

Ny Sonia, though Ny Sonia, though Stoleton politics. In fact, her friends give her credit for to interfere in government affairs even though as she had every opportunity to do so. But she and collections a keener interest in women's addenies into taking a keener interest in women's adjiv into taking a keener interest in woodcultural affairs. This reflected Sonia's little known ndia's cultural heritage. Apart from taking a course Maional Museum, she spent much time interacting pullage. bullayakar, Kapila Vatsyayan and L.P. Sihare. She densiderable expertise in Indian paintings, folk and holy restorer. On Colhires. She also became an expert restorer. On the role of India's hips with her husband, she played the role of India's ambaccade the wives of ambassador. She would explain to the wives of adets the cultural richness of the country.

The Italian girl who had initial problems adjusting to living with the nation's first family, settled down to a close relationship with her motherin-law. Indira found in Sonia the daughter she'd always wanted. Sonia, in turn, was deeply influenced by her.

But there was a point beyond which Sonia refused to go. Rajiv had to apologise to Simi Garewal after unsuccessfully trying to persuade Sonia for two months to appear in the documentary on him. Even the children, who could occasionally go to a restaurant without being harassed, would have had an added security risk if they appeared on film. "What is very difficult is what the children have to go through," said Rajiv. "They cannot have normal lives. Even their education has been messed up because of security problems. If anyone has had to sacrifice, it is the children.'

Garewal too never got past the patio of the Gandhi house. But not everyone was denied access. There were a few select couples whom they did meet, mostly Rajiv's friends from Cambridge and Doon School or earlier. They had nothing to do with his work and many did not ostensibly benefit from their association with him. There were Amitabh and Java Bachchan, Suman and Manju Dubey, Mohan and Nimal Thadani, Michael and Usha Albuquerque, Sunita and Romesh Kohli, Deep Kaul and Romi Chopra, and earlier Arun and Nina Singh. There were also some others like the Quattrochis and Satish Sharma. These were friends with whom the family could relax over simple meals at home.

In fact, there was nothing really elaborate about Sonia's

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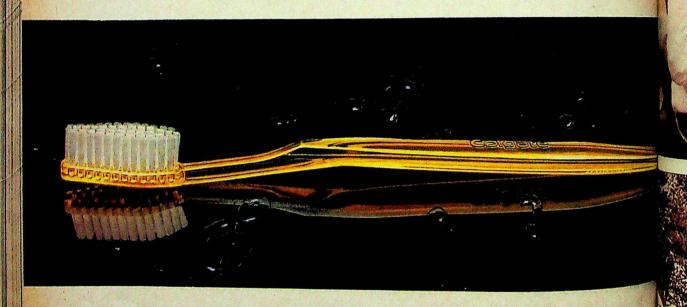
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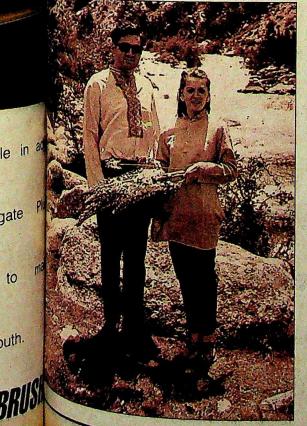
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table. Food would be basically Indian, served in thalis. There would be dal, two vegetables, kachumber salad and perhaps a non-vegetarian dish. And it's not as if the refrigerator was loaded. There is a story about a hungry Rajiv as prime minister looking around for food in the house and complaining, "Isn't there even a banana to eat?" But Rajiv was not a big eater, though he was partial to stuffed parathas. Before he became prime minister, he would love to go to Bukhara at the Maurya Sheraton Hotel and ask the chef to especially make him a crisp pudina paratha. Sonia had a weakness for ice cream. When the Gandhis visited Ajitabh and Romola at the Mehrauli farmhouse rented from Arun Singh, Romola made sure her fridge was packed with several flavours of ice cream, which Sonia would devour with pleasure.

N a campaign flight recently. Rajiv carried uninspiring sandwiches with him. His security official, Pradeep Kumar Gupta, who also died in the blast, opened his own box containing stuffed aaloo parathas. When the smell wafted to the front of the plane, Rajiv commented on it. An aide requested Gupta for his hamper and Rajiv promptly helped himself to a paratha.

Rajiv also had a sweet tooth and was especially partial to jalebis, firni, gulab jamuns and chocolates. And since he did

Rajiv was the quintessential family man. The family came first. There was always time for Sonia and the kids, trips to game sanctuaries, the mountains, Pushkar or Jaisalmer. And for playing with his dogs.

not do any exercise to speak of, despite being a strong swimmer, it presumably did some damage to his waistline.

However, it did not seem to affect his boundless energy, which was more than apparent during his election campaign. He would go for days with minimal sleep and still surface early the next morning looking fresh and chipper as ever. Perhaps it had something to do with the porridge Rajiv loved for breakfast, a habit inculcated by his grandfather. Pandit Nehru believed that if you started the day with a hearty breakfast, it did not matter if you did not eat during the day. And porridge was an integral part of that breakfast.

Nevertheless, Rajiv liked the good things of life. There was a restrained elegance about the Gandhi home, breeding, and way of life, that comes from several generations of wealth, education and taste. But there was also a spartan element to it which reflected the family's unpublicised sensitivity to Indian conditions. When there was a drought in parts of the country, the family went for months without eating meat. It was a small, unpublicised, but meaningful gesture.

Sonia inherited from Mrs Gandhi a haughty disdain for the plastic society of upwardly mobile urban India. It is in rural India, in Amethi, in the tribal regions of Bastar or Nagaland that she came to life. Here, she would really reach out to the local people, freely talking to them about their problems with an easy informality. In Amethi she was the

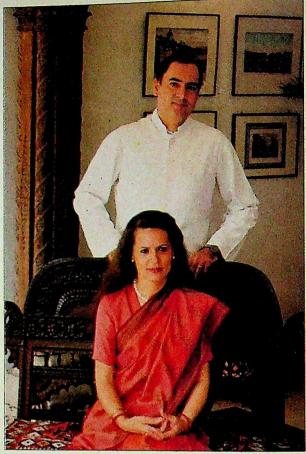
social worker-picking up poor, hungry, naked children, trying to help in small ways. As a family person, it was as if she felt a responsibility for the children of the extended family of Amethi. And naturally Amethi sponded likewise.

Na trip to an Orissa village, Rajiv and Sonia happened to walk into a hut. The eves of an infant in her mother's arms were literally encrusted with flies. Rajiv walked on, but Sonia stayed back and sent for Dr Sahay, their personal physician. The doctor applied some eye drops. When they were leaving, she asked the mother the name of the child. "Sonia!" was the prompt reply.

Rahul and Priyanka are the natural inheritors of their parents' aristocratic predilections. And it showed right through the most recent trauma. They were well-versed in the practice of public stoicism. They were told over and over again to steel themselves for tragedy and to conduct themselves with dignity in public. Mrs Gandhi constantly told Rajiv and Sonia the story about a visit by family friend B.K. Nehru and his Hungarian-born wife to Jawaharlal Nehru in prison during the freedom struggle. Moved by his condition, B.K. Nehru's wife began to cry. Nehru immediately remon-

strated with her: "Always remember one thing. We Nehrus never sob in public." The generational message must surely have been passed on to Rahul and Priyanka.

Rahul, 21, shares his father's interest in things mechanical, is outgoing, and at the same time, sensitive. Personal tragedy did not prevent him from stooping to tie the shoelaces of an elderly mourner who had trouble doing so himself. On the other hand, the tough, strong-willed Priyanka, 19, seemed to be a reincarnation of her grandmother, Indira. She took charge of the situation and all the attendant details. She selected the site for the cremation, received her brother at the airport, ensured her mother regularly got coffee and nimboo paani, and opened up the whole house, except her mother's room, to accommodate



Sonia's friends give her credit for refusing to interfere in the affairs of the Government, even though as first lady she had every opportunity to do so. She did, however, influence Rajiv into taking a keener interest in women's issues and cultural affairs.

condoling family men bers and friends.

There was anoth Nehru tradition that n mained intact. In publi Sonia communicati with her children main through eye contact. Fre as Rajiv's body layinstar a glance from Sonia, and of her head, would he Priyanka what was quired-order a refresh ment for a guest, s another one off to t door, seat somebody ner to someone.

And the family w always impeccab groomed. Reflecting this, a family intimater calls a strange coi cidence. A day before Ind ra Gandhi had died, th friend noticed her leaving for a meeting in a crum pled sari. This was w usual because Indiralite to preen herself behin closed doors before going out or receiving gues When her friend enquire about her unwonteds piness, Mrs Gandhi plied: "It doesn't real matter now."

Rajiv, too, loved drea ing up, shaving close smelling good. But cently on a visit to Char garh, this same fami friend noticed Rajiv loc ing uncharacteristica dishevelled, his kur pyjama crumpled dirty. She noticed sort thing else too. For the fr time since his marriage Rajiv was not wearing wedding ring. Whisher she asked. Rajiv show her his hands. With

heat and non-stop campaigning, his fingers had switch The ring would no longer fit. But more than that, his was discoloured by blotches and allergy. She had had Rajiv as a child and whenever she had praised his glor skin and complexion", Mrs Gandhi would remark in pride: "It's a reflection of my love." In a rare private month of Rail Mrs Gandhi confided the Mrs Gandhi confided that she so loved the texture of Resident that the so loved the texture of Resident that the so loved the texture of Resident that the solution of the solution the solution skin that when he was a little boy, asleep in his room would sneak in and stroke his face tenderly.

The friend, relating this story, breaks down and we ause the most because the most horrific image that instantly crashe her mind is that of the mangled remains of Rajiv, occup. no more than a corner inside a makeshift casket -ARUN CHAC amily men ends. was another ition that re ict. In public ommunicate ildren mainly contact.Eve dylayinstate n Sonia, and d, would te hat was no ler a refresh a guest, s

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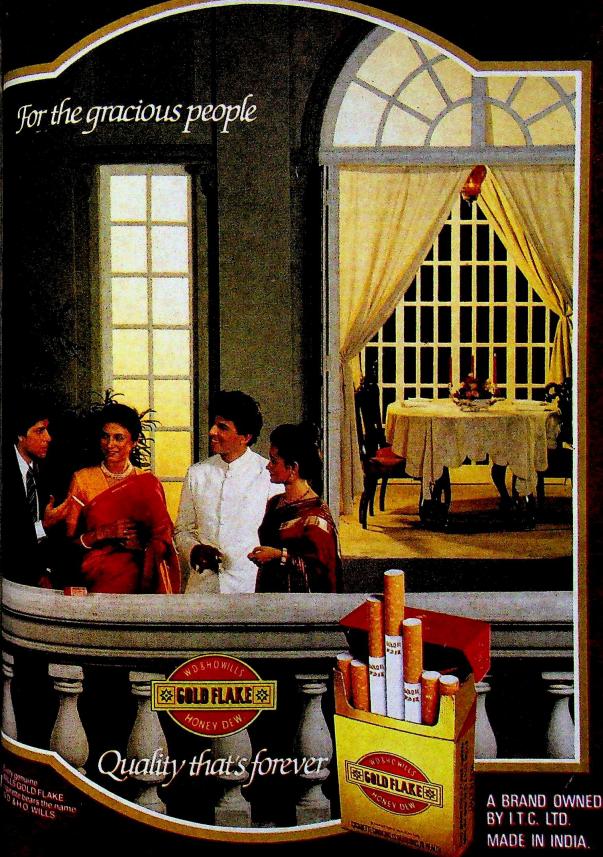
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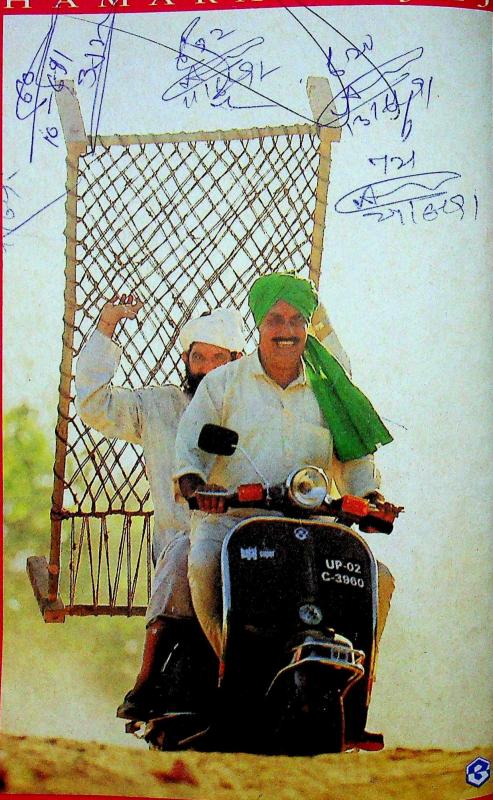


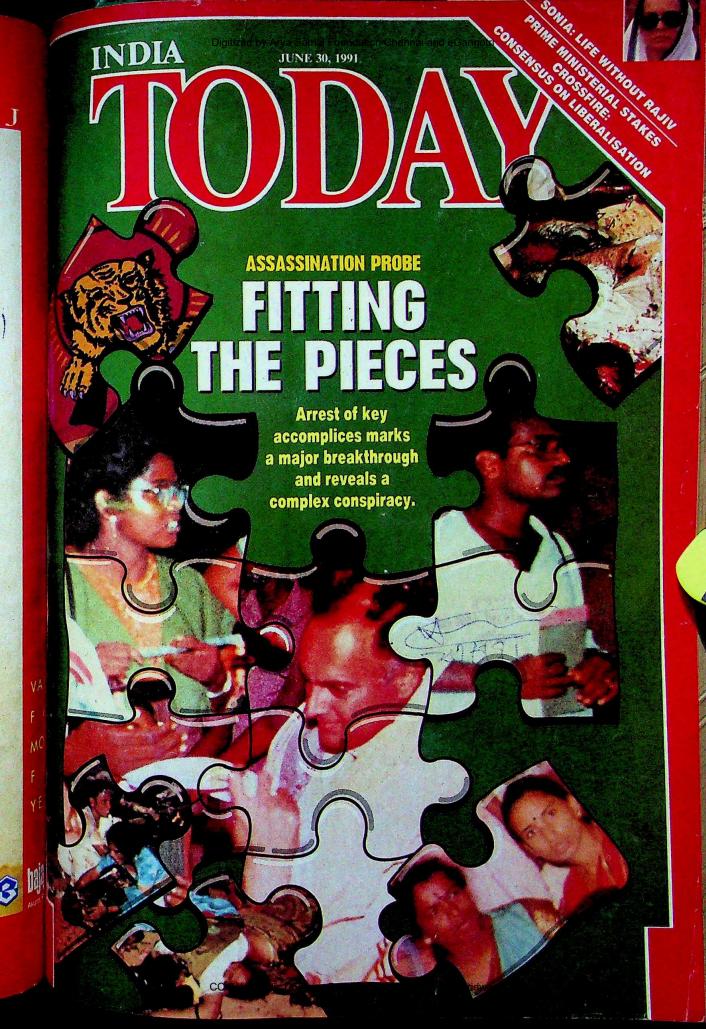




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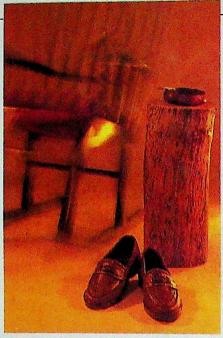
## HAMARA BAJA





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# What they didn't teach me at IIM, Ahmedabad.



It was a great morning. After a long time a bird

chirped me awake. I was going to Bombay for a training

programme. So no office. A whole day to pack and plan.

And then a flight at four in the afternoon.

Documents, files, pre-training brochure, clothes,

stationery, air-tickets. I packed in everything. A quick shower and I was ready to leave. Just when I

turned the key to lock my door the phone rang. Goddamn it... now who? I walked in, snatched the

phone off the hook and yelled 'Hello!' A familiar voice, my wife said "Hi', did you

pack in your 'Windsor'?" A lump rose in my throat, then I relaxed.

I had. Back in the taxi I reminisced. They hadn't taught me

this at Ahmedabad. The art of remembering.

Life's so much easier with them.



taught me LIBERTY

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## Fitting the Pieces

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ORP/393/91

One of the most complex murder jigsaws of recent years is being pieced together by a gack team of detectives and experts in Madras. The massive manhunt for Rajiv Gandhi's assassins has turned out to be a painstaking process but the CBI sleuths have dug up some promising clues.

COVER STORY ......42



### Countering Sympathy

The Rajiv assassination has necessitated a change in electoral strategy midway through the elections. The BJP tried to play down the Ram Rajya theme and did not talk about the sympathy factor. The Janata Dal trained its guns on the BJP and cut out barbs aimed at the Congress(I).

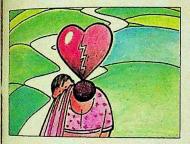
ELECTION SPECIAL ......30



### A Deceptive Calm

Although calm and normalcy seem to be returning to Srinagar, it is quite a deceptive state of affairs in the Kashmir Valley. With a series of dramatic killings and kidnappings, pro-Pakistani elements seem to have bounced back into the limelight in the trouble-torn border state.

SPECIAL REPORT......38



#### New Beginnings

Ever since marriage ceased to be a pact unto death, second marriages have become mcreasingly respectable. The old stereotypes are crumbling as men and women refuse to be defeated by their first failure and on instead for what a cynic called "the thumph of hope over experience".

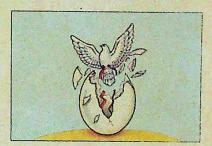


#### Picking Up the Threads

Suddenly Sonia Gandhi finds herself in a void after the brutal assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. A shroud of sorrow and silence has descended over 10, Janpath as Sonia, Rahul and Priyanka receive letters of condolence and meet admirers calling on the family. and try to reconcile to a life without Rajiv.

SPECIAL FEATURE......102

CHERENT EVENTS



#### **Towards Consensus**

In the third of the series of INDIA TODAY debates, Pranab Mukherjee, Bimal Jalan, R.N. Malhotra, J.N. Sapru, L.M. Thapar, L.C. Jain, B.S. Minhas, Kaushik Basu, Jay Dubashi, T.N. Ninan, V. Krishnamurthy and Ramesh Chauhan discuss the various aspects of economic liberalisation.

### ONTENTS

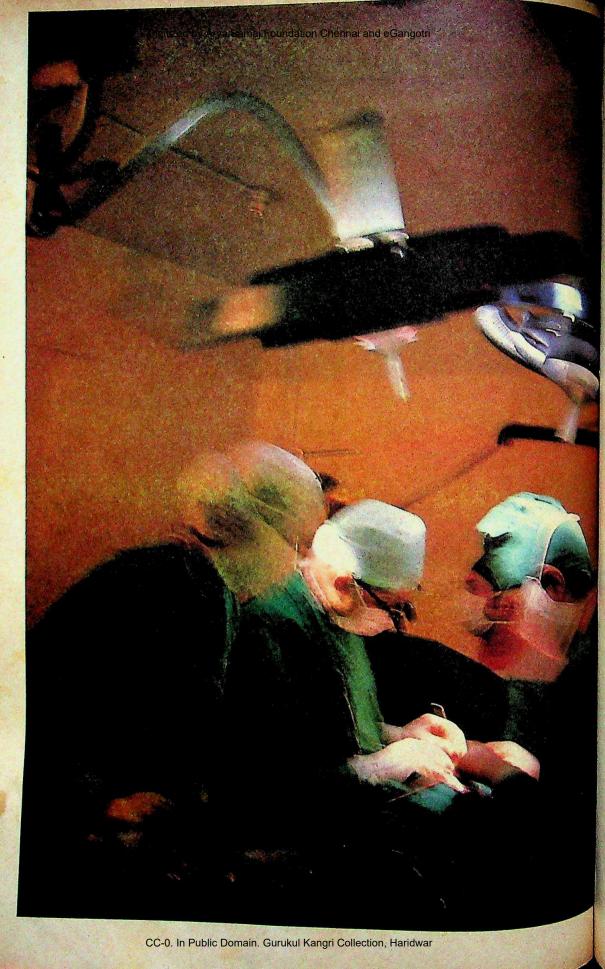
	COMMENT
	CAPITALOGY 11
	itection special 20
	The Co. 20
	The Contenders:
	Prim Prim 1
	Prime Ministerial Stakes
	Solding Together, Fractiously
	Congress(I):
	TEW D
	New Power Brokers 28
	Bharatiya Janata Party:
	tountering Symposts
	Countering Sympathy
	lanata Del a Grip
	Groping for a Grip
ě	
ğ	Sharpshooting Sheriff 32
No.	A SPECIAL REPORT SPECIAL REPORT 32
2000	special sheriff 32
2000	TAL REPORTS  Tunjab: Perilous Poll  Seshmir: A Deceptive Calm  38
1000	Deceptive Col
	kashmir A Deceptive Calm 38  Agesination P
	e diation p.
	Patron Calm
	Pleces
	42
ď	

N.T. Rama Rao: Fast Moves	53
Bharat Yatra Trust:	
Dubious Development	55
Gujarat: Killer Stroke	57
Tripura: Violent Ways	59
Madhya Pradesh: King Con	
Bihar: Trial Trauma	
BOTTOMLINE	64
SIGN POSTS	
SPECIAL FEATURE	
Second Marriages: New Beginnings	72
BUSINESS FEATURE	
Silicon Valley:	
Logging on to India's Potential	80
TRADE WINDS	85
BUSINESS	
Cash Crunch: The Big Squeeze	86
Uttar Pradesh Cement Corporation:	
Privatisation Problems	90
Gold Sale: Prudent Ploy	92
BUSINESS BRIEFS	96
The Markets: Scrips Slide	98

THE ECONOMY MONITOR	100
SPECIAL FEATURE	
The Gaudhis:	
Picking Up the Threads	102
MEDIAWATCH	
NEIGHBOURS	
Nepal: Challenge of Change	109
RELIGION	
Jains: Diamonds are not Forever	112
CROSS FIRE	
Economic Liberalisation:	
Towards Consensus	115
GUEST COLUMN	133
BRASSTACKS	139
LAW	
Dawoodi Bohras: Landmark Battle.	142
BOOKS	
Tragic Bunglings	147
Ripping off the Veil	
ESSAY: So What's Next?	151
EYE-CATCHERS	152

Cover design by PRANAB DUTTA & B.K. SHARMA

JUNE 30, 1991 . INDIA TODAY 1



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technology isn't just relevant to industry. But also to every Indian.





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# But we don't have a house of our own.'

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**OUR GOAL: SHELTER FOR** 

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Let us hope the assassination of Rajiv Candhi ("Darkness at Midlife", June 15) start a process of soul-searching by our oliticians as to whether any political artivity, let alone blatant propagation of bale, should be allowed to distort our political reasoning and provide indirect ostenance to the forces of destabilisation. PINAKI CHAKRABORTY Calcutta

The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi has brought an end to the Nehru dynasty. The ragedy makes one thing clear: our style of campaigning has to change and, like motern countries, there must be no mixing with the masses for security reasons.

ARVIND B. KULKARNI New Delhi

■ The brutal assassination of Rajiv Candhi is a grim pointer to the illpreparedness of our intelligence and law morcing agencies. The need of the hour is b review the functioning of these organisations and gear them up to dectively frustrate all attempts to create chaos and instability in the country. NAVNEET DHAWAN

With the death of Rajiv Gandhi the ountry has suffered an irreparable loss in kms of dynamic leadership. One may not acceptable of functioning, but Rajiv was a leader par excellence. It is a matter of oncern that in the land of Mahatma Gandhi, violence is resorted to to settle plitical differences.

Bangalore CHIDANANDA KUMAR

### FEUDAL ATTITUDE

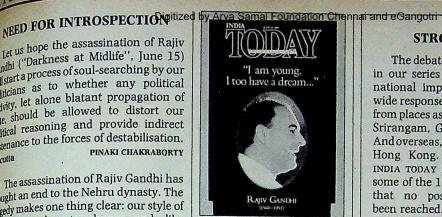
There is a point of absurdity after which mesimply gives up ("Succession Shenani-June 15). I propose we eliminate the ectoral process and save ourselves the expense of elections. We must that our prime minister will always ka member of the Nehru family and our Paliament will be the private playground dimstars and relatives of chief ministers. there is no hope for intelligent, selfrepecting politicians in our country.

SAVITA SHARMAH

There is no doubt Rajiv's murder is a bagic and condemnable act of senseless being But ironically it has signalled the sinning of the end of the destructive adency within the Congress (I): the monopersonality-worshipping being is now giving the country an Portunity to be free from dynastic rule thichlas made a mockery of our democratraditions since 1969. attornia, US

of India)

SRIRAM KALAGA



Suprisingly, the BIP is complaining about Sonia's Italian birth. Wasn't Advani born in Pakistan? We'd prefer an Italy-born prime minister to a Pakistan-born one.

Calcutta

AMIT BAGARIA

The sycophancy in the Congress(I) makes me feel that the British should've continued to rule as we are monarchist and feudal by nature.

New Delhi

H.C. SHARMA

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FOR THE FORTNIGHT JUNE 16-10, 1991

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#### STRONG REACTION

The debate on secularism, the first in our series 'Crossfire' on issues of national importance, sparked a off wide response, with people writing in from places as distant as Chhindwara, Srirangam, Guwahati and Srinagar. And overseas, from the US, Europe and Hong Kong. While congratulating INDIA TODAY for holding the debate, some of the 150-odd respondents felt that no positive conclusion had been reached.

Khushwant Singh's remark on Shivaji received the brunt of the readers' ire; over a third of the respondents expressed strong disapproval. An enraged Pune reader even terminated his subscription.

Girilal Jain's comment describing Muslims as stupid was another point of controversy. It was felt if Singh was obliged to apologise, Jain should too.

The debate threw up some interesting suggestions: that secularism could be inculcated in people by building a scientific temper. Another view was our freedom of expression should not be abused to insult any community.

#### MISCONCEIVED NOTIONS

Though I am a Christian, it is the first time I have heard that a tie is a symbol of the cross ("Contentious Credo", May 15). I was amused to hear Ashis Nandy say so. A tie could be more appropriately a symbol of a hangman's noose! Nandy insists on looking for Christian symbolism where there is none. He should also know that transubstantiation is a Catholic doctrine which Protestants rejected, and Margaret Thatcher having been the prime minister of a predominantly Protestant country would be the last person to associate herself with it. BISHOP PATRICK

- M.J. Akbar says Muslims are being made to pay for historical reasons like 800 years of Muslim rule in India and the creation of Pakistan. But the happenings in Kashmir today eloquently show how Hindus are treated by the Muslims, not under the fanatic zeal of a medieval king but by the traditional Muslim fundamentalist.
- Girilal Jain's remarks about Muslims were fanatical and unacceptable. Khushwant Singh's description of the Afzal Khan-Shivaji episode was also in bad taste. Persons like Singh, Jain and the other so-called liberals, secularists and intellectuals inten-

tionally like to insult a person, community Samai Foundation Christiand eGangettePING TABS orreligion held in high esteem by millions in the name of freedom of expression.

MANZOOR A. SANGIN

#### REFRESHING CHANGE

At a time when we are nauseated by the abominable beings called politicians, your interview with Nawaz Sharif ("Let's solve the Kashmir problem honourably", May 15) was refreshing. He emerged as an honest, down-to-earth man with common sense and the way he handled the questions regarding black money and drugs was especially noteworthy.

Madras

FAHIMA HILAL

■ It was delightful to read the views of the Pakistani prime minister on economic matters and relations with India. Our government should take a leaf out of his book and liberalise the economy.

Hyderabad

HARBANS SINGH

#### COURTING READERS

■ I was gripped by a sense of deja vu when I read the article on courting, not inexplicable in the wake of stories like the one on muiras and audio cassettes. Is your magazine under the impression that its readers need cheap titillation?

Bangalore

SRIRANG MANOHAR

#### SHOCKING BEHAVIOUR

The caste hatred displayed in Mehrana ("Medieval Murders", April 30) is just like the racial discrimination in South Africa. Crimes like these require special tribunals to try the accused summarily and execute the guilty without further recourse to appeals. Bombay R.N. VASWANI

two jokers. The 9th Lok Sabha had so many that the show couldn't go on. Hope the next has fewer.

Washington DC AMIR C. TUTEJA



Yeats' words are relevant today: A statesman is an easy man, he tells his lies by rote; A journalist makes up his lies, and takes you by the throat; So stay at home and drink your beer, and let the neighbours vote.

Chandigarh SANJEEV K. SINGLA

■ It would be wonderful if your magazine started covering the abuse of power at different levels of government on a more regular basis ("Wanton Ways", April 30). This will not only be a means to educate the people but will also help in monitoring the performance of politicians and bureaucrats.

New York

RAGHU DESIKAN

#### DIFFERING VIEW

You oppose the lobbying against Pensi and want the market to decide whether the Pepsi joint venture should be allowed or not ("Behind the Forex Trap", April 15). Your objections may have carried weight a year ago, but you do not seem to be aware that Pepsi has failed on its export commitments. The lobbying was done because multinationals come to India with the promise of export but very few fulfil the export commitment and this worsens our foreign exchange position. It is observed that Indian companies without foreign investment are the major exporters, because foreign companies invest in India for the Indian market and sell components to India. New Delhi

RAMESH CHAUHAN

Chairman, Parle Exports

#### DISTORTING LEGEND

The current day politicians quoting the legend of Prahlad ("Statenotes. Gunning for Power", March 31) is blasphemous. It was, in fact, Lord Vishnu who manifested himself as Narasimha to slay the demon-king Hiranyakashyap and not his son Prahlad who was himself a great devotee of the lord.

Bangalore

C. YADUNATH

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## ONE THING DAD TOLD ME WHEN

I WAS A KID:

"SON, A SHIRT LOOKS BEST WHEN IT'S WORN WITH A TIE." SO, EVERY SUMMER, WHEN THE TEMPERATURE TOUCHED 40°C

I BOILED.

THIS YEAR I'M COOL.



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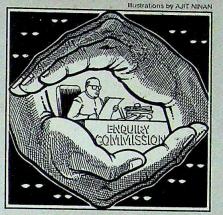
## Politicising Inquiries

TVEN though the nation was dumbstruck by Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, it was relieved that there was no repeat of the phically-abetted violence of Norember 1984. Mercifully, most politicans acted with restraint. But as the led leg of electioneering started, sepior politicians made crude attempts algaining mileage from the tragedy. Some of the wildest, unsubstannated charges were hurled with

vant regard for what violent reacionthey might spark off. The ugliest erample of this was when a Conress(I) Rajya Sabha member

Hamed caretaker Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar for Rajiv's death. Other senior Congress(I) leaders and their allies have variously blamed the CIA, the DMK, the RSS, and a wide assortment of "anti-nationals". They have hinted hat Rajiv's security was deliberately relaxed.

The danger from this kind of loose talk is that it could politicise the post-assassination inquiry now under way adlead to the kind of chaos that characterised the Thakkar ommission of inquiry into Mrs Gandhi's killing. Already, be terms of reference given to the commission headed by Supreme Court Judge J.S. Verma have been altered and apanded under pressure from the Congress(I). Prior to this



development, the arrangement was simple: Verma would look into security lapses; the CBI would investigate the murder. This was done deliberately in order to avoid the confusion of the Thakkar probe in which the judge and his staff as well as a Special Investigation Team (SIT) reporting to him-simultaneously investigated the conspiracy and the security lapses. The Thakkar operation became a convenient handle with which to tarnish individuals out of political favour through calculated leaks. In a bizarre denouement Thakkar wound up indicting

R.K. Dhawan while the SIT exonerated him.

Changing terms of reference after they are framed, especially if this leads to duplication of charges given to a commission and police investigators, simply confuses the chain of command and opens the process to manipulation.

An investigation into the murder of a national leader should be treated as sacrosanct and made immune from political interference or pressure. It would behove politicians in all parties to exert maximum restraint in order to ensure the impartiality of the probe rather than to use it as an instrument for fixing political opponents, tarnishing innocent reputations, and promoting inter-group hatreds.

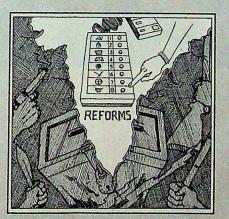
## Steps for Electoral Reform

ACH time that the country recovers from the rigours of a general election there's jubilaconthat the world's largest democacy has once again confounded the comsayers and elected a new Parement; and anguish over the elecoral system's rapidly snowballing hortcomings—procedural delays. diape, booth-capturing, financial iregularities.

But there have been no serious adconsistent efforts at reform even hough there are several short-term blutions capable of making an inellorative dent in the system.

Voting machines, for example, are a technology whose has definitely come. They have been tested, found sterlive, and promise tangible benefits like reduction in of paper, easier identification of party symbols, speedy nothing of results, less manpower. There is no earthly on for not introducing them.

Laws on corporate funding of elections and expenses teither vaguely defined or outright archaic. The law sets tapenditure limit for candidates at an absurd Rs 1.5 laws will never stop the entry of black money and porate donations for elections. The realistic approach be to subject party funds to public audit while also



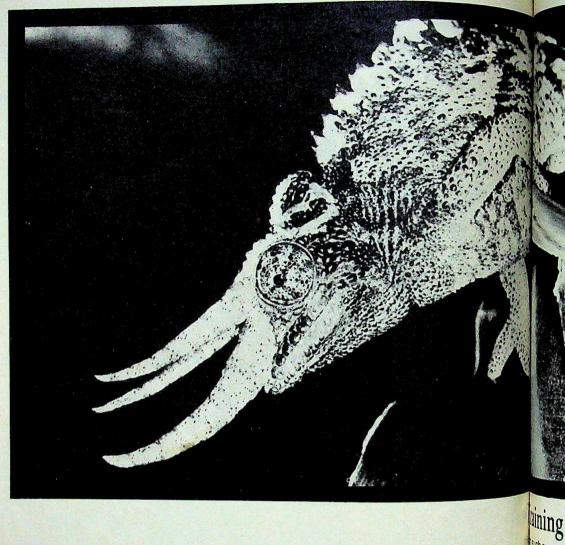
raising candidate expenditures..

Similarly, laws cannot prevent rigging. But certain steps may help. In rural areas, polling stations can be moved away from neighbourhoods of dominant castes (which prevent other castes from voting) to more neutral areas. Voters can be given identity cards. Booths can be equipped with better communication facilities such as walkie-talkies to ensure an immediate administrative response in case of trouble. Right now, many booths don't even have a roof on them let alone a phone connection.

Also, the proliferation of non-serious candidates means more expenditure for bigger ballot papers on which figuring out the party symbol of a voter's choice is like solving a jigsaw puzzle. But more serious, when there are dozens of candidates for a single seat, a terrorist or criminal has a larger field of operation: he can kill any one of them and achieve a countermanding of the election. The law could make contesting elections more difficult by raising deposit amounts or endorsement requirements.

These steps will not rid the system of all its deficiencies but will certainly make elections in the world's largest democracy more efficient, less cumbersome.

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#### Fair Bias

 Several male mid-level officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have been screaming no-fair about what they believe is a case of reverse discrimination in fa-



your of the fairer sex. The male mid-career blues stem from the proposed posting of five women officers to the sought-after Indian Embassy in Washington D.C.

Two are already there and if Foreign Secretary Muchkund Dubey has his way, three more will soon join them in the senior positions of counsellor and above. What has exacerbated the male reaction is that most of the female officers are on their second successive plum postingknown in foreign service parlance as Super A. This means they have not served rigorous sentences in places like Hanoi. Pyongyang or Rangoon, while their disgruntled male colleagues have. A home tenure, which the prospective women candidates for Washington are completing, doesn't count as a hardship posting. Aware of the rumblings, Dubey assured a meeting of the Foreign Service Association that he would be scrupulously fair in the matter of postings.

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guns so far as the Washington matter is concerned.

#### Tactical Talk

· Agree with him, disagree with him, admire him for his brutally frank demeanour, or revile him for his curt behaviour, the one thing never in doubt about T.N. Seshan is that as chief election commissioner he has provided colourful grist for the copymills of journalists covering the polls.

Even though Seshan has been garrulous, even overbearing, at his regular press conferences, he is wont to freeze up and become defiantly taciturn when approached by reporters for special interviews. He has a dislike for one-on-one chats.

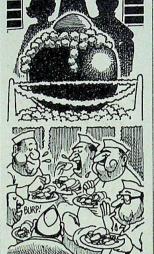
When exasperated reporters, seeking a clarification, call his home, a gravelly voice (not an answering ma-

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN



chine) with a distinct south-Indian inflection quickly informs them: "Mr Seshan is not at home." When is he expected? "Don't know." Whose voice is it? There's hardly any speculation on that score. As every reporter who has been to his regular briefings over the last three months can testify: it's unmistakably Seshan playing But in this day of affirmative his own deep throat.

 Congressmen, no matter how puritanical their outward trappings, have one thing in common-a yen for the good things of life. Especially when it comes to food.



And this common predilection was in ample evidence during the train journey to Allahabad for the immersion ceremony of Rajiv Gandhi's ashes.

While ordinary folk-including journalists-travelling on the asthi special train carrying the ashes, had to lunch and sup from frugal food packages prepared by the Parliament canteen, Congress(I) VIPs travelling in other compartments indulged their epicurean appetites on food specially catered from elsewhere.

So while it was a simple dal-chawal fare for everybody else, the mourning VIP Congressites feasted on vegetarian malai koftas, shahi paneer, and ice cream.

On the railway platform en route, throngs of people had waited endless hours for the last darshan of their leader. But several party leaders who were travelling on the train tried to force their way into the limelight by waving at the crowds.

paid no heed, preferring to leader might wish to utter

focus their attention only on the carriage of the slain Congress(I) leader,

## His Master's Voice

• R.K. Dhawan seems to have his work cut out for himself. During Gandhi's time he functioned not only as confident but as bouncer, ensuring that any. body he considered undeserving would be thwarted from gaining access to her. He played door-keeper to Rajiv with equal aplomb.

Now that his patron is no more, he was seen playing grand marshalfor P.V. Narasimha Rao. During Rao's maiden press conference as Congress(I) president, a battery of photographers had parked themselves near the dais in such a way that neither the reporters standing behind nor Rao could see each other, Suddenly, Rao barked: "Dhawan, inko hat-



ao," (remove them). And "Dhawanji" (as Rajiv aldressed him) sprang into at tion, uprooting tripods and pushing the lens-happy in terlopers into the back ground. But he made sun the vacated space was given to reporters with whom he had a rapport. And through out, he kept a trained ear for any other command the

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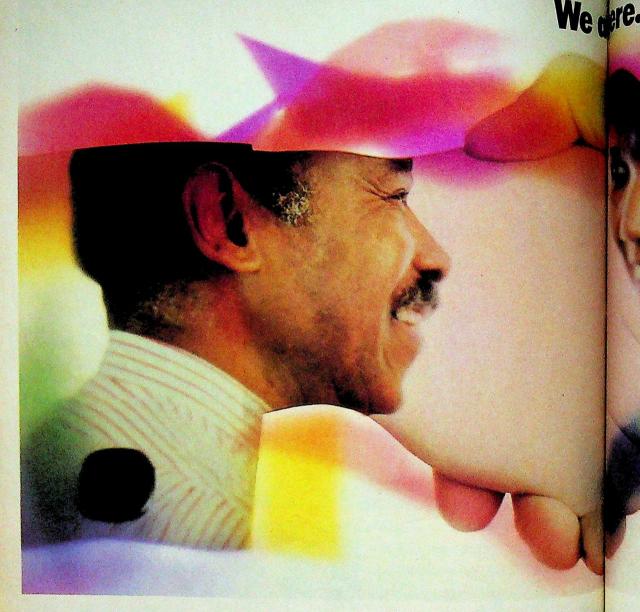
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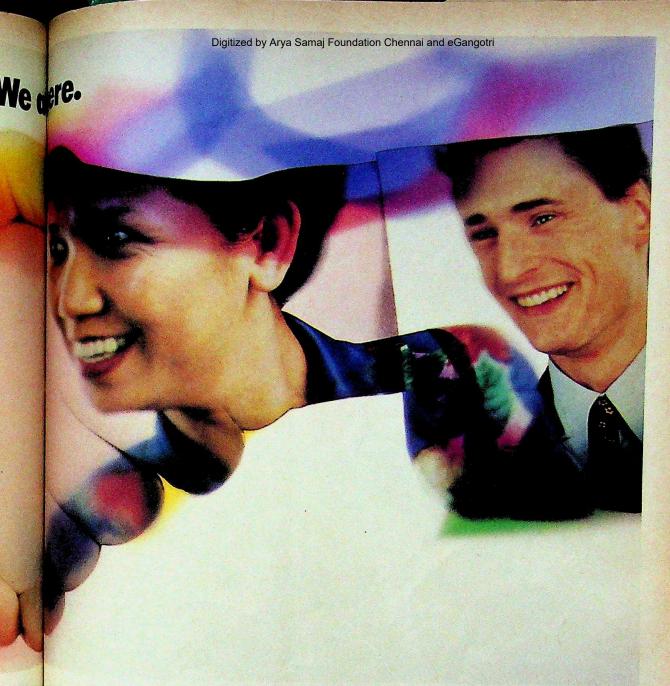
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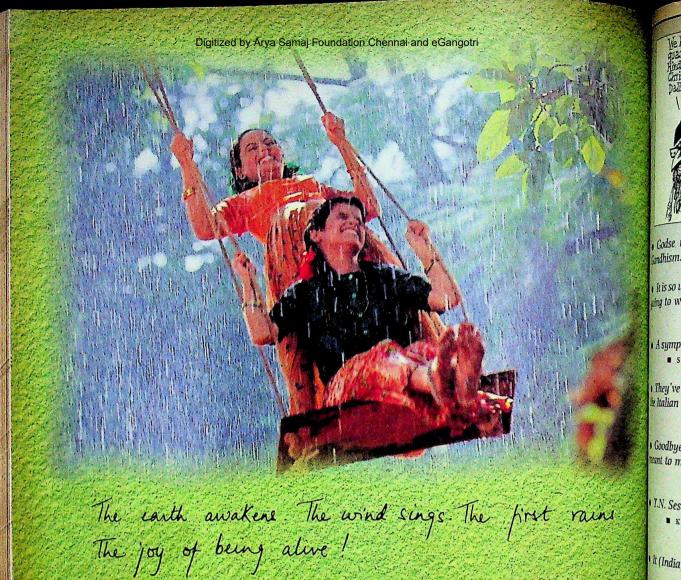
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Godse might have killed Gandhi but Congress workers have killed andhism. N.T. RAMA RAO in The Telegraph

hisso unbelievable....when I visit his (Rajiv's) house, I almost feel he is ing to walk through the door.

■ AMITABH BACHCHAN in The Hindustan Times

Asympathy wave is akin to a cheque which cannot be encashed twice.

SHANTA KUMAR, chief minister of Himachal Pradesh, in Indian Express

They've chosen a new name for the Indian National Congress. It's called k Italian National Congress.

■ OM PRAKASH CHAUTALA in The Sunday Times of India

Goodbye. Sir. We'll meet up again, up there. I'll never forget what you've unt to me. 'Goodnight, sweet prince.'

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR, on Rajiv Gandhi, in Sunday

I.N. Seshan is like a man who marries in haste and repents at leisure.

\* K.R. MALKANI on the CEC decision to reconsider countermanded polls. in The Hindustan Times

li (India) is not a non-violent country. It has to be made non-violent. I JYOTI BASU in The Statesman

We have lost a beloved member of our own family...what Ram was to dhya, Rajiv Gandhi was to Amethi.

MALBARADUR SINGH, pradhan of village Bhoi, near Amethi, in The Telegraph

Where is the dynasty line in the Congress(1)? Who elected India who Who voted for Rajiv Gandhi? Is it not the people of India who 96ht Rajiv Gandhi to power?

# P.V. NARASIMHA RAO in The Independent

Even if we are isolated, it's majestic isolation.

■ L.K. ADVANT in The Sunday Observer

They are banned from reading it till they are 30. It's not meant for kids. It

1808HA DE on her children reading her latest book Storry Nights, in Onlooker.

thow after Amitabh Bachchan it will be me because after him. I am the

Idon't believe in dating...I have never dated anyone.

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· MADRIERI DIXIT in Cine Blitz



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#### CLOSE RIVALS

■ Ideologically, they may not exactly be seeing eye to eye. That, however, hasn't stopped the two rival candidates from sharing a common vehicle for their election campaign. Sitting on two extremes of the jeep. their banners aflutter in the wind, the two contestants



ar remarkhajuraho appeal to people to vote for one of them. While one flaunts his symbol-appropriately, a motor car-the other contestant goes around displaying a cupboard sign. Alelection their though symbols may be poles apart, it hasn't come in the way of their campaigning.

What voters fail to un-

derstand is, why would two rivals pool in their resources? Well, the answerls simple and entirely logical. Not only is the duo conserv. ing fuel, the rivals happento be husband and wife as well

And so, no matter who eventually wins the polls, the electoral spoils are going to remain within the family, one way or the other,

#### TIPSY COOL

■ Al Capone could take a tip or two from them on how to get around the prohibition laws. Recently a band of enterprising men across the state of Gujarat came up with a unique way of keeping tipplers happy and the scorching heat at bay.

Instead of lacing the

ever-popular ice lollies with some innocuous coloured water, they have been sprinkling them liberally with alcohol. With the summer temperatures soaring, people eager to beat the heat are lapping up these lollies like there's no tomorrow.

And it's an absolutely foolproof method. The ice is a sure way to cool off while



the liquor helps soothe frazzled nerves. Even as the lolly sellers are raking it in the law-enforcers feel that as far as the law is concerned they are skating on thin ice.

But the ease with which the prohibition policy is being flouted it is obvious that when it comes to imbibling alcohol, barriers and warnings are just lollipop.

#### **JILTED GREED**

■ All that glitters is not gold. So learnt a bartanwala in Calcutta last month, to his utter dismay.

Not content with merely exchanging new stainless steel utensils for old clothes. the ambitious man was eager to make a fast buck. And one afternoon, a golden



opportunity literally stared him in the face. Just as he and a housewife were haggling over the number of saris to be exchanged for a large utensil, his eyes stopped at a long gold chain dangling tantalisingly around her neck. Without further thought, he grabbed the chain and fled, leaving behind his wares.

He then went laughing all the way to the pawn shop at the thought of having made a major killing, only to be rudely shocked. Apparently, the necklace was shiny, but not made of real gold. Eventually, it was the went who housewife chuckling to the kitchen. getting a basketful of utensils for a fake necklace.

#### POLL PLOYS

People contesting elections have an annoying habit of going around with a begging bowl to finance the pursuit of their political dreams. But Ghaziabad businessmen, who are the usual targets of fund-raisers, have come up with a unique way of fending off the persistent and tiresome political aspirants.

Every time a candidate comes to their door asking for any kind of donation, pat comes the answer: we're contesting the elections ourselves, so if you could donate money, that would be a tremendous help in



fighting the elections.

Needless to say, the ploy has succeeded too well. Not really willing to shell out any money from their own pockets, the poll adventurers beat a hasty retreat. Meanwhile, there is a battery of businessmen masquerading as election candidates all over Ghaziabad.

#### COSTLY COOING

■ Whopping phone bills seem to be the rule rather than the exception. Yet when a Ludhiana businessman received a Rs 35,000telephone bill he keeled over with shock, as many of the calls were to Jalandhar.

Suspecting



hanky-panky, the gentleman complained to the authorities. Of the 600 calls registered on his bill he claimed to have made only 30, amounting to a mere Rs 1,500. And there was absolutely no record of it in Jalandhar.

The mystery was soon solved when the businessman's teenage daughter confessed to having made all those long distance calls Apparently she had made as many as 45 STD calls to her beau in Jalandhar. Once she even dropped off to sleep leaving the receiver off the hook for seven hours, S certainly won't be let of the hook for this one.

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# SWEEPSTAKES

By INDERJIT BADHWAR and ZAFAR AGHA with bureau reports

VEN with more than 300 Lok Sabha seats still up for grabs in the last lap of polling, the Ifire had gone out of the electioneering. Rajiv's assassination dampened not only the spirit of the Congress(I) but also the enthusiasm of other parties in the contest. And as leaders criss-crossed the country, they found the electorate dulled, numbed and enervated. A crowd of even 5,000, in places where a turnout of 20,000 at an election rally used to be the norm, was billed as "impressive".

Second-rung Congress(I) leaders who fanned out in an organised manner across the country in an effort to

harness a sympathy wave received non-committal, lukewarm responses. P.V. Narasimha Rao's tours through Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan were snail-paced. The Rajiv whirlwind effect was missing. Where Rajiv would have covered 20 meetings in eight hours, Rao managed just two in the same time in Udaipur and Pali. Karnataka Chief Minister S. Bangarappa's efforts to elicit voter emotion by

campaigning with an urn containing Rajiv's ashes fell flat as did Ratnakar Pandey's tour through Andhra Pradesh where he campaigned to "bring Sonia in". In Uttar Pradesh, Madhavrao Scindia found himself addressing barely 500 people in his first trip through Lucknow and Mahmoodabad.

Candidates for other parties, equally tired and short of funds-V.P. Singh battling virtually alone for his party in Uttar Pradesh, Atal Behari Vajpayee and Murli Manohar Joshi stumping for the BJP in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh—also found themselves victims of the political slow-down that had gripped the country.

But the slow-down was only the lull before the storm that was sure to rage in the last week of June when a new government and a new leader would ascend to the helm of the nation's affairs. The last days of the elections may

have been lackadaisical but they were not completely without political portent and messages.

Indicative of the shape of things to come were the messages that leaders were sending out to one another rather than to the electorate. The BJP's new line was that in view of the crisis of leadership in the Congress(I) only the BJP could provide stability. The themes of the Congress(I) and National Front campaigns became nearly identical as both stopped attacking and vilifying the other choosing to aim their sharpest barbs, instead at the BIP. And in a surprise move, E.M.S. Namboodiripad wrote a letter to P.V. Narasimha Rao askingthe Congress(I) to shed its "hostility towards CPI(M)-led alliances in Kerala, West Bengal, and Tripura, and the

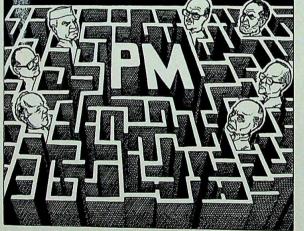
National Front".

It was clear that the traditionally "centrist" or "secular" parties were anticipating a realignment of forces-the formation of a government representing an anti-BP front-in the event of a hung Parliament. While the arithmetic of the final tally in Parliament still re

mained murky because of uncertainty about whe ther the sympathy factor would go in the Congress(I)'s favour or whether the BJP would be the indired beneficiary, there was little doubt that the Congress(I), I it emerged as the single largest party, would play a

dominant role in shaping the political scenario. In the event of the BJP failing to obtain a majority and the party has stated that it would remain in the opposition if it does not get it—the shape of the Government and the choice of the new prime ministrative would describe the start of the new prime ministrative would describe the new prime ministrative wou would depend to a large degree on the performance of the Congress(I) and how the party resolves its leadership struggles.

If the party and its allies obtain a simple majority of come close to it, the next prime minister will most likely be a Congression be a Congressman. If it falls way short, and a major realignment becomes necessary at the Centre, it may be forced to shop for a leader from outside.



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## THEY CONFIENDER SGangotri

## NARASIMHA RAO

NLDING CONSENSUS CARD

RENGTHS: Respected as "senior by all factions in the Congress(I) tause of long-term association with Whou-Gandhi family. Rajiv consulted closely and he was number two

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He was chief minister Andhra Pradesh from 171 to '73, and after

moving to the Centre, handled every major portfolio in the Union cabinet barring finance; had a successful stint as foreign minister. Looked after the writing of the party manifesto. Advantage in cowbelt because of his excellent oratorical abilities in Hindi. Has been a picture of dignity as party president. Likely to get backing from industrial houses.

WEAKNESSES: Has no charisma or

crowd-catching abilites. Almost lacklustre. No power base of his own even in the south. Had to rely on the Ramtek constituency in Maharashtra in '89 to enter the Lok Sabha. Had no say in the distribution of party tickets and commands no loyalty of his own within the party. Has undergone coronary bypass surgery. Even opted out of the fray this time due to ill-health.

SCENARIO: If party comes within reach of a majority and needs additional support from outside, the Left and National Front combine would prefer to support him above others. National Front Chairman N.T. Rama Rao favours him. In this situation. Congress(I) would have to unite behind a consensus leadereven temporarily-able to draw support from outside. Will be a shooin if Sonia Gandhi indicates her preference for him.



## N.D. TIWARI

LANKING ON THE COWBELT

TRENGTHS: Only major leader a Rajiv's assassination with a wide ay over the Hindi belt and the disat national image of the quintessenold-style Congressman of the Indeadence struggle. Never a floor-Backed by powerful Brahmin across north India.

Enjoys reputable anding as a secularist anng Muslims. Persuacharming. Excellent alor with a wide range government experience aving held the foreign. ance, industry portfo-<sup>08</sup> Uttar Pradesh chief dister four times. Popuwith industrialists bebe of reputation for ding quick decisions.

WEAKNESSES: Lack assertiveness. Nick-"S.L.T." and Mari; (Spine-less Do-Nothing

Tiwari). No following outside the northern belt. Party critics blame him for the electoral debacle in Uttar Pradesh in 1989 because he advised Rajiv Gandhi to hold simultaneous polls. Poor political manager. In order to stymie him, coterie will project him as a man who was secretly plotting against Rajiv even while Rajiv was prime minister.

After the Congress(I) was ousted from power in Uttar Pradesh he hasn't had much of a say in party affairs even when the state was passing through

recent political convulsions. Even if he was consulted on political strategy, could not make much of an impact nor climb back to the position he had slipped from. Of late he has mostly confined himself to the state and all this could work against him at a time when he has to have the full backing of party leaders and parliamentarians from the state if the north-south divide surfaces in the party while choosing a leader.

SCENARIO: All depends on the number of seats the party gets in Uttar

Pradesh and the support BHAWAN SINGH

Tiwari can muster from other northern states. If the north produces a substantial chunk of Lok Sabha members, Tiwari's chances skyrocket. The north will fight to its last to prevent-for the first time—the prime ministership slipping away to the south. Such a prospect has already united Tiwari rivals like Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, Sheila Dikshit, Jagannath Mishra and V.C. Shukla behind him.



IUNE 30, 1991 . INDIA TODAY 23

## SHARAD PAWAR

CRAFTING SOUTHERN STRATEGY STRENGTHS: At age 50, he is the youngest contender since Rajiv. A formidable leader of proven abilities, without traditional Congress culture hangups. Has a well-entrenched power base in Maharashtra with considerably wide support outside, specially in the southern states where he is still titular head of the Pawar-Chenna Reddy-Veerendra Patil axis. Has a considerable war-chest of funds with which he has financed parliamentary candidates in the south. Gujarat and even the Hindi belt. Rivals

like A.R. Antulay have conceded his superior edge as a leader and accepted his suzerainty. His reputation for pragmatism has endeared him to the powerful lobby of industrialists in the state. Savvy administrator, who also has backing in the largely traditional Shiv Sena. Large section of Congress(I)'s Young Turks-the new group of young party members and MPs-is aclobbying for him. Madhavrao Scindia will back him. Statement issued by the group of MPs, calling upon the party to ensure that the next

enced, is tailor-made to fit Pawar. Wide contacts with opposition leaders like Chandra Shekhar, R.K. Hegde, Rama Rao and George Fernandes from the days of the 1984 "opposition unity" conclaves when Pawar was in the Congress(S).

WEAKNESSES: Nonentity in the Hindi belt. Lacks the acceptability of a traditional Congress leader with the Nehru-Gandhi image. Syndicate will oppose him tooth and nail. Less acceptable to the Left. Syndicate may try to play the "Sonia card" against him by spreading the word that he was political anathema to Rajiv, and Sonia would not like to see him emerge.



Digitized by Acade an ajohong dayloan we and a Macade an act of the Macade and Macade an gotri 35 seats from Maharashtra gives him a substantial voice in the crp through the state's MPs. Since he was likely to bring in the biggest portion of MPs with no frontrunner of its own (besides the ailing, elderly, consensus candidate Narasimha Rao), Pawar would best represent the interests of the region south of the Vindhyas against the leadership from the Hindi heartland. An influential group of Pawar's friends. however, advised caution—to give himself another year to fully consolidate his position in his home state, as also to improve his ability at speaking in Hindi and English. In this case, Pawar's group would support a consensus candidate

who would be willing to either step down after a year on grounds of health, or agree to move up to occupy the President's post once Venkataraman's term is over next year. But there are grave doubts in the Pawar camp whether Narasimha Rao, would want to vacate the post once he is installed as prime minister. in an imminent party election. Pawar's men will insist on a secret ballot, confident that the Maratha strongman would be able to mobilise enough support in the CPP.

## CHANDRA SHEKHAR

#### PLAYING THE DARK HORSE

STRENGTHS: Alternative Hindi belt leader. Seniority. Long association with Congress. The "Chandra Shekhar factor": rose from a reputation of "hasbeen" manipulator to stature of national leader of prime ministerial dimensions-without the support of a real party-within four months. Pragmatism. Oratorical ability. Highly-developed skills of political management. Quick decision-making. Excellent industrial contacts with no dearth of money. Personal contacts with key leaders including R.K. Dhawan, Sharad Pawar, and Jyoti Basu.

WEAKNESSES: No mass base or backing of political party. Questionable image because of association with people like Adnan Khashoggi, Chandra Swami, Devi Lal and Om Prakash Chautala. Congress(I) rank and file, especially in Hindi belt, increasingly hostile to him in the wake of the assassination. May not be acceptable to Sonia view of the bitterness that characterised his relations with Rajiv after Congress(I) withdrew support.

SCENARIO: If Congress(I) obtains less than 200 seats and a major realignment occurs under a leader from outside Congress(I), Chandra Shekhar stands a better chance than V.P. Singh. Firstly,



his seniority would make him acceptable even to the Congress old guard, like Narasimha Rao or N.D. Tiwari. Secondly, even if the sp picks up only a handful of seats, it is counting on an alliance with the Akalis in Punjab (13 seats at stake) who are grateful to him for declaring elections in the state as well as the AGP in Assam (14 seats being contested) which may be similarly indebted. Even if Chandra Shekhar leadsa coalition of 15 to 20 MPs he will be a force to reckon with in any horsetrading that occurs in a situation in which Congress(I) gets less than 230 seats.

More likely, Chandra Shekhar wil bide his time and adopt a 'wait and set policy. He would prefer to stay out of government and let Congress(I) leaders try and run the troubled country. The belief being that an unstable Congovernment would not be able to survive six months coalition And when the coalition falls, a new alignment of centrist forces would come about and invite Chandra Shekhar with his proven leadership abilities head the government.

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UNIPULATING THE SYNDICATE RENGTHS: A modern Chanakya. lister of the politics of manipulation, rigue. Solid base of support in Ma-Pradesh. Reputation as a successadministrator—as chief minister, bion communications minister and Mjab governor. Brilliant at handling blicity and the media. Effective funder who, like Pawar, has financially poorted candidates outside his own tale, Good contacts in industry. Excelat reputation among minorities and is the target of the BJP in the state.

WEAKNESSES: Too many enemies whin the state and outside. Opposed by salwarts like Madhavrao Scindia,

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Shukla brothers. Has the image of a politician who uses people and then dumps them. He will have to fight sworn enemies like H.K.L. Bhagat and Sitaram Kesari, whom he antagonised during his vice-presidentship of the party five years ago. Has the stigma of several scan-

SCENARIO: He would not be able to muster support of more than two to

three dozen party MPs. However, he can boost his strength by making deals by entering into alliance with rivals. On the basis of his influence and political base in Madhya Pradesh he can play the role of king-maker but is unlikely to be accept-

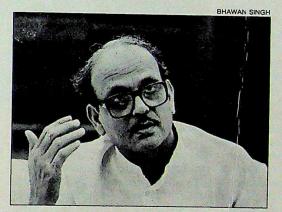
able as king, unless he can successfully manipulate the syndicate to accept him as a guardian of their interests. The role of a king-maker is no mean achievement for a person who was hardly known outside his state.

## V.P. SINGH

#### IOPING FOR A RE-ALIGNMENT

TRENGTHS: Apart from L.K. Advani, conly leader with national recogniand solid base of support. Old ingressman whose loyalty to Indira indhiwas never in doubt. Brilliant and idess campaigner. Hindi belt leader. Muslim and backward caste back-4 More acceptable to Left and regional than any other candidate. Now iotal control of party. Reputation for assy unchallenged and biggest

WEAKNESSES: Diminished broadappeal after Mandal. Seen as a donal leader hungry for votes at any dical price. Made enemies of middle and intelligentsia. Poor political



manager. Bad media manager. No powerful financial backing.

SCENARIO: In the event of Congress(I) failing to get a clear majority and the National Front-Left combine gaining about 130 seats in a House of 510, Singh will have the option of

supporting a faction-leader (in the Congress(I)) of his choice. This will enable him to make himself acceptable to a section of Congressmen in order to make a late pitch for the top post in case a merger between the Janata Dal and Congress(I) becomes necessary. Since Rajiv's death, Singh consciously made an effort to bridge the gap between himself and Congress(I). He took a soft line on that party

while blasting the BJP.

At a time when Congress(I) does not have a national leader with an acknowledged vote-catching ability, Singh may be sought by a section of the party because of his influence with the Muslims, backwards and Harijans.

## JYOTI BASU

### NON-CONGRESS OPTION RENGTHS:

Impeccable Modern outlook. Acceptable and a wide number Centrist politicians cutting across and even ideological, lines. Marxists' only real vote-catcher in Bengal who is equally popular sections of the party. Good among the middle class, essince he espoused since he espoused the platform after Kajiv Garage Platform after Platform afte



ment with centrist forces of the political spectrum.

WEAKNESSES: Regional politician. No following in Hindi belt or south. Has not been able to articulate clearly the ideological stance of the party since demise of communism in east European countries.

SCENARIO: If the National Front-Left combine obtains 150 seats and Congress(I) under 190, a coalition of National Front-Left and Congress(I) is likely. If V.P. Singh is unacceptable to Congress(I) and if no Congress(I) leader is acceptable to the National Front combine, Basu may well emerge as a consensus candidate.

## Holding Together, Fractiously

Though the party has put up a surprising show of unity, it continues to be riven by divisive warlords

By ZAFAR AGHA

OOMSAYERS declared it would shatter into smithereens. Others, less pessimistic, surmised that deprived of Rajiv the lumbering giant would run out of control and lose its way. But just before the final electoral countdown, as second-rung leaders P.V. Narasimha Rao, Arjun Singh, Madhavrao Scindia, Sharad Pawar, and N.D. Tiwari addressed election meetings in a well-orchestrated campaign across the country, it was clear that the Congress(I)-in the immediate reckoninghad surprised everyone. Like a well-oiled machine, it had got down to the task at hand: gaining the tape at the hustings.

Yet the surface calm was deceptive. Beneath the cohesion of an organised party, regional satraps and party bosses were grappling to secure positions from which they could best wrest post-electoral advantages in the high-stakes leadership tussle.

With hopes of Sonia Gandhi leading a sympathy-raising campaign receding even as 304 parliamentary constituencies awaited polling, the party was forced to heed Arjun Singh's appeal: "In the absence of a towering personality, only unity and democratic functioning can save us." This the party displayed in admirable fashion. In a show of unanimity, no matter how provisional, it elected Narasimha Rao as president on May 29, sending a signal to party rank and file that the Congress(I) was capable of remaining united, even without a Nehru-Gandhi scion at the helm. Claimed H.K.L. Bhagat proudly: "The prophets of doom proved incorrect.'

Yet, to the initiated, it was clear that the crisis had blown over only till the elections. Because Rajiv's death and

Narasimha Rao campaigning in Gujarat

In a show of unanimity, no matter how provisional, the party elected Narasimha Rao, sending out a signal that the party remains united.

Sonia's refusal to join politics had led to the greening of ambition among many Congress(I) leaders, including Narasimha Rao, Arjun Singh, Pawar, Tiwari and Scindia, whose supporters had communicated their leader's preference for the top slot in the Congress(I) Legislature Party (CLP).

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The fight for the prime ministerial berth began from the very moment Sonia refused to accept the cwc(1) proposal. The palace coterie, the "syndicate", that had traditionally drawn its political nourishment and pre-eminence not from a grassroots power-base but from its proximity to the throne and ability to influence Rajiv by controlling access to him-R.K. Dhawan, M.L. Fotedar, Satish Sharma, V. George and Sitaram Kesari-pitched the first political googly by trying to install Arjun Singh as vice-president to maintain its hold on the party. Pawar and Tiwari, opposed to the syndicate taking over again, made common cause in a strange-bedfellows game by floating the idea of having four vice-presidents to represent every region. Disclosed a Pawar supporter in Delhi: "We further confused their plan by demanding the induction of a Harijan and Muslim vice-president each.'

Simultaneously, Tiwari, Pawar and Arjun Singh began to openly lobby for the prime ministerial post. Tiwari held

late night 'durbars' at his Jantar Mantar Road residence in New Delhi. He called personally on Bihar supremo Jagannath Mishra to solicit his support, and sounded all the bigwigs in the north Indian Brahmin lobby, including his known detractors in Uttar Pradesh politics like AICC(I) General Secretary Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, Madhya Pradesh party chief S.C. Shukla and former chief minister of Rajasthan, Harideo Joshi. Tiwari went as far as to buy peace with Balram Singh Yadav, former UPCC(I) president, and K.N. Singh, for mer AICC(I) general secretary and senior Uttar Pradesh leader. Former Youth Congress president Anand Sharma, said to be active on Tiwari's behalf, contacted the emerging Young Turksinthe Congress(I). In his wonted soft-spoken and humble style, Tiwari would drop oblique hints: Dekhiye ab Rajivji nahi hain; ab hum sab ko sath mil kar chalnaha election ke bad bhi sath rahna hoga. (100k Rajivji is no more; we will have to stid together, even after the elections.)

Pawar was no less active. He had indicated his intentions during the ref first cwc(1) meeting which had elected Sonia as president. When Arjun Singh had proposed Sonia's name, and asked a loaded question: "If we elect president now, who will be our prime ministerial candidate?" And again

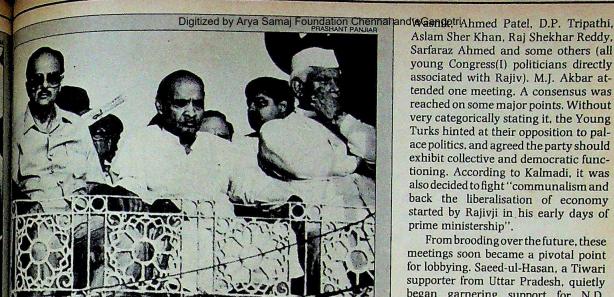
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mleft) Arjun Singh, Rao, Tiwari at Rajiv's condolence meeting in New Delhi

Used to living under the shadow of charismatic kaders, the Congress(I) is desperately trying to evolve democratic and collective functioning.

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He lobbied the southern troika Karunakaran in Kerala, Veerendra in Karnataka and Chenna Reddy Andhra Pradesh, informing them the would "accept Raoji, but in anybody else makes a bid for the ership of the CLP", he would jump to the fray.

Meeting his friends at Suresh madi's Bishambhar Das Marg resihe instead of Maharashtra Sadan, <sup>Mar plotted</sup> his gameplan in a much twder fashion than any of his rivals. that the ambitious Arjun Singh strying to seek Sonia's blessings (his day trip to Sriperumbudur to pay mage at the assassination site was one mple), Pawar apparently wooed him lassurances of a plum post later. And in order to win the support of VaSabha MPs, who form a part of the Pawar harnessed the political enerof Kalmadi, who began exercising dout with a newly-emergent pres-Broup of post-Independence Conthen labelled the Young Turks. group had held its first formal ang on May 25 at Ashok Gehlot's ence. It came into being—as a

group-through sheer accident. Shahid Siddiqui, Udayan Sharma, Shubhabrata Bhattacharaya (journalists-turned-Congress politicians who came close to Rajiv in his last days) and Bihar leader Tariq Anwar were travelling together in the same car after Rajiv's cremation at Shakti Sthal when their conversation drifted to the challenges before the party and the country.

NE of them suggested that the "youngsters" in the party should become the bulwark of preserving "Rajiv's legacy"-the programmes of modernisation and economic liberalisation that Rajiv had stood for-lest these ideals be threatened with extinction at the hands of a resurgent old guard or syndicate. The discussion drifted to the threat from communalism and the BIP. and it was decided at the spur of the moment that the younger lot in the Congress(I) get together and issue a statement pledging its commitment to Rajiv's ideals.

The very next day others were contacted. A meeting was fixed at Ashok Gehlot's house which was attended by Kalmadi, Anand Sharma, Tariq Anwar, Saleem Sherwani, Harish Rawat, Udayan Sharma, Salman Khurshid, Shahid Siddiqui, Suresh Pachouri, Harikesh Bahadur, Akbar Ahmed, Mukul

Aslam Sher Khan, Raj Shekhar Reddy, Sarfaraz Ahmed and some others (all young Congress(I) politicians directly associated with Rajiv). M.J. Akbar attended one meeting. A consensus was reached on some major points. Without very categorically stating it, the Young Turks hinted at their opposition to palace politics, and agreed the party should exhibit collective and democratic functioning. According to Kalmadi, it was also decided to fight "communalism and back the liberalisation of economy started by Rajivji in his early days of prime ministership".

From brooding over the future, these meetings soon became a pivotal point for lobbying. Saeed-ul-Hasan, a Tiwari supporter from Uttar Pradesh, quietly began garnering support for N.D. Tiwari; Kalmadi for Pawar; Suresh Pachouri for his mentor Arjun Singh; and Salman Khurshid for Madhavrao Scindia, a "man who can carry the Rajiv legacy", as Khurshid told people on the phone. The emerging Young Turks met six times at different places: twice each at Kalmadi's and Anand Sharma's residence and once each at Gehlot and Harish Rawat's.

While the Young Turks lobbied for control, the syndicate tried to dismiss them as a "media creation". The coterie may have been down, but it was far from out. It had its own gameplan. Once the cwc(1) meeting on May 29 was over, it started operating from the Central Campaign Coordination Committee in a bid to build its clout during the last lap of the electioneering. Narasimha Rao functioned as chairman, Pranab Mukherjee. convener, and Fotedar, Dhawan, Sitaram Kesari, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Margaret Alva, Shiela Dikshit, R.L. Bhatia, P. Shiv Shankar, and R.D. Pradhan were its members.

Since Rajiv's death, this committee was running the party and "taking the day-to-day decisions", according to Alva who is now co-spokesperson of the party with Mukherjee and Janardhan Reddy. Bhagat wrested the key task of supervising elections in Uttar Pradesh despite not being a member of the campaign committee.

Used to living under the shadow of charismatic leaders, the post-Rajiv Congress(I) is desperately trying to evolve "democratic and collective functioning", as both Arjun Singh and Tiwari emphasise. The crucial question was whether this process of evolution could survive the internecine, if lowkey, lobbying that could easily tear apart the entrails of the party.

CONGRESS(I)
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## New Power Brokers

As the Congress(I) slowly recovered from the brutal assassination of Rajiv Gandhi and got back on its campaign trail for the final round of voting, it was the realignment of forces that was taking place within the party that was much more interesting—and potentially of far greater importance—than

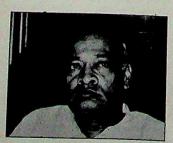
any of the campaign promises it held out to the electorate. For it is this delicate balance of power among the predominant factions that will go a long way towards finding a solution to the vexatious issue of the party's leadership and its internal workings in the crucial period ahead.



The status quoists. who are backing Narasimha Rao

THE Syndicate consists of men who have survived entirely on the oxygen of the Gandhi family. At the moment, due to a variety of selfish reasons, they are arrayed behind party President Narasimha Rao, 70, an unassuming politician who has been described as the party's "consciencekeeper".

These politicians wield a huge amount of influence in the Congress(I) and in the government whenever the party is in power. However, since most of them have no real base of their own, it is immensely important for them to keep palace politics alive and potent so that their clout is not reduced.



NARASIMHA RAO



M.L. FOTEDAR

For example M.L. Fotedar, 58, and R.K. Dhawan, 53-both strong Gandhi family loyalists-still haven't given up hope of persuading Sonia to reconsider her decision to enter politics although for the time being they are extending support to Narasimha Rao. Men like Shiv Shankar, 61, H.K.L. Bhagat, 70, and Ghulam Nabi Azad, 43, too have banked entirely on the Gandhi dispensation for their eminence; and those like Pranab Mukherjee, 56, have discovered the hard way the travails of falling foul of the Gandhis-he was dropped like a hot brick by Rajiv after the 1984 elections and had to wait a while before worming his way back into favour. Those like Sitaram Kesari, 71, and Balram Jakhar, 67, too have no political base of their own, though the former enjoys clout as the party treasurer and Jakhar is adept



R.K. DHAWAN



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at juggling the various groups within the party.

It was the Syndicate's fear of cutting their umbilical cord with the Gandhis that prompted them to rope Sonia into entering politics—anything rather than let powerful figures such as Sharad Pawar or N.D. Tiwari gain the upper hand. Tiwari has a strong political base both within and outside his home state Uttar Pradesh.

Moreover, he is raring to take over the reins of the Congress Parliamentary Party. The Syndicate distrusts Maharashtrastrongman Pawar because of his intolerance of palace politics and dynas tic rule.

This does not mean however, that the Syndicate will refuse to make any last-minute compromises to ensure is own survival.



PRANAB MUKHERJEE

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<sub>inti-syndicate</sub> regional osses have emerged at he national level.

THE salient characteristic of this emerging group of challengers is its mosition to dynastic rule. All of them

#### SHARAD PAWAR





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hey have united to keep ve the 21st century gacy of Rajiv.

W though they support different ddviduals the Young Turks are sive in their belief that Rajiv's lega-



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N.D. TIWARI

share a vision of creating a party that runs democratically instead of being controlled by a coterie. Most of the challengers are regional satraps, powerful in their respective states. For example, Sharad Pawar, 50, in Maharashtra and N.D. Tiwari, 67, in Uttar Pradesh. Pawar is acceptable to politicians within



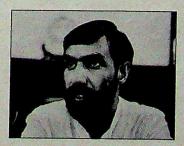






SURESH KALMADI

cy, especially economic, must be kept alive. The group, still amorphous, came together unwittingly after Rajiv's death. and has discovered in their unity some kind of security that gives them a bargaining position with the party heavyweights. Even though some of them



ANAND SHARMA



K. KARUNAKARAN

the Congress(I) and in opposition parties. He also enjoys a good rapport with the old guard and the emerging Young Turks. Madhavsinh Solanki, 64, of Gujarat, for one, will back Pawar in any election for the party leadership. Tiwari is another experienced politician who agreed with Pawar that Sonia should not be roped into politics. In any contest he can expect Jagannath Mishra, 54, of Bihar, to back him. These men may well be competitive but they are unlikely to sunder the party for the sake of their ambitions. The other two satraps in the group are Arjun Singh, 60, of Madhya Pradesh who aspires to be prime minister with Sonia's blessing and K. Karunakaran, 70, of Kerala who is backing Rao for now, and is keen to move to the Centre if his party loses in the state.



SURESH PACHOURI

have not held any party position and some are not even MPs, they are busy lobbying for their mentors. One of the most active is Suresh Kalmadi, 44, who is currently mobilising fellow Turks for his mentor, Sharad Pawar. Madhavrao Scindia, 46, is trying to expand his area of influence, but is fending off friends who want to push him into the race for the prime ministership. Anand Sharma, 38, and Salman Khurshid, 38, are also trying to strengthen their positions. While Suresh Pachouri, 39, is trying to gain support for his one-time enemy and now mentor Arjun Singh. Ideologically, the Young Turks are committed to Rajiv's legacy which they see as being liberalisation of the economy and the fight against communalism.

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## **Countering Sympathy**

## Cadres redeployed for intensive campaigning

N the aftermath of the Rajiv Gandhi assassination when the nation was still absorbing the enormity of the tragedy, BJP leaders were redeploying their cadres with the panache of generals faced with a crisis on the battlefield. Within a week of Rajiv's death, the party shifted 5,000 of its cadre to areas which were thought to be electorally weak. Monitoring the redeployment of its

troops was Bhaurao Deoras, brother of the RSS chief Balasaheb Deoras, who camped in New Delhi while other party functionaries mapped out detailed charts of every assembly segment in the constituencies the BJP was contesting.

Even while the Congress(I) was still in a state of shock, the BIP had begun analysing reports from the states about the mood of the electorate in an attempt to work out a strategy to neutralise the possible sympathy factor. However callous it may sound, according to Govindacharya, party general secretary and ideologue, the assessment of "the convertibility of the event into votes" had begun by May 24, two days after the assassination. Within four days the reports from the party units had indicated "neither a wave nor a breeze" of sympathy for the Congress(I), especially in areas like western Orissa, Telengana, Karnataka and Gujarat. Nevertheless, the Sriperumbudur tragedy was a factor for the voters. The task of the party was to project the BJP as the only contestant capable of meeting the challenges ahead.

So the party quickly zeroed in on "weak" zones in traditional BJP strongholds in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, which it felt may be affected by a sympathy wave. They also decided that additional efforts would have to be made in some constituencies of the Vidharbha region of Madhya Pradesh and Marathwada of Maharashtra, where the party had not contested before but had made inroads. Next they assessed the weak spots in parts of Uttar Pradesh-Avadh and Rohilkhand-where 43 constituencies were to go to the polls in the second phase. Cadres from places where elections were over were then

moved to these areas. In less than a week about 2,000 party workers were sent to Uttar Pradesh, about 1,000 to Madhya Pradesh and 100 were shifted within Rajasthan. In the south, it was decided that nothing could be done until the "dust settled". The work of reorganising cadres was handed over to a senior RSS pracharak Mukundal.

The party made a reassessment of its



Advani: quick thinking

electoral planks too. It was decided that the campaigners would not mention anything about the Rajiv killing on the assumption that ignoring the sympathy factor would be the best way to counter it. The cadres were told to speak more about the BJP and less about others. And in a rather tame attempt at not provoking what a senior leader called "social tensions" with its strident campaigning for Ram Rajya, the leaders decided to soften, if not altogether delete, such references in the second phase.

According to Arun Jaitley, BJP's national executive member, the party decided to "play the patriotic card" and the sole guarantor of its stability and unity, in front of an electorate, disturbed and sickened by the violence of the assassination. But this did not go ac. cording to plan as the people seemed to respond more sharply to Ram rather than stability and midway through the second phase of the campaign the sp decided to start once again harping on the Ram factor.

Beginning around June 6, BJP leaders toured the south. L.K. Advani went to Trivandrum and parts of southern Tamil Nadu, Murli Manohar Joshi to Bangalore and Hubli, Sikander Bakhi to Madras, Coimbatore and the Nilgiris and Atal Behari Vajpayeeto Hyder MAJWADI

abad, Warangal, and Mahbook nagar. The last phase was of course kept for touring Uttar Pradeshand Bihar-where Advani, Vajpayee and Joshi covered all the constituencies where polls were due, before June 11.

The BJP as is its wont did not H(SJP). facin stop with just chalking out the new 1 strategy or trying to win a few seats lather to op in the south. Going a couple of steps | pess(I) by ahead, its leaders finalised thetac lut In thei tics to be adopted after the electron have tions. If it manages to win around out m 200 out of the 450 contested seats | The first mo as party optimists think—the more from Mo reasonable estimates put the figure anothe Plan at 120 to 175-it will refuse to form frongress I a minority government by pro lostensibly jecting the ethical aspect-notral har's know ing without the mandate of the stedthatt people. Instead it will sit is When the the Opposition, waiting for the 75wiftly dis Congress(I) and its allies to hope sia's appeal fully self-destruct.

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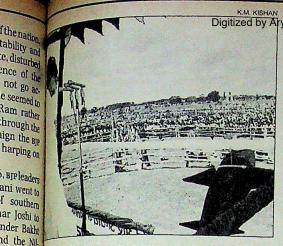
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handra Shekhar awaits a miracle

10R the Samajwadi Janata Party ont did not H(SP), facing almost certain oblivion at the hustings, the question is not na few seats taker to opt for an alliance with the spess(I) but how best to bring it at In their uncertainty, the party have hedged their bets by ing out multi-pronged feelers.

The first move was the controversial aliom Mohan Dharia, vice-chairaof the Planning Commission, to the fuse to form Congress President P.V. Narasimha nt by pro astensibly written without Chandra t-notal dar's knowledge, in which Dharia date of the stedthat the two parties should join will sit in When the overture backfired, the ng for the Tswiftly disowned any knowledge of dia's appeal.

hensp President Devi Lal sprung a ince. Instead of canvassing support dhya issue specandidate in Amreli constitunples at the Gujarat, he asked voters to aranasi and the Janata Dal (Gujarat) nomisharply of Interestingly, it was the Janata o all-out the Chief Chimanbhai Patel, along promises of Subramanian Swamy, who first thandra Shekhar and Rajiv issue log the Political observers feel Devi Lal's action was aimed at Chimanbhai Patel so as to use to a conduit for negotiations with usly it find the said usly of the sandchandra Shekhar parted ways reate more the former established the Janata the two have renewed contact Rajiy's death.

another development, Subramato make the control of the control o Rajiv Gandhi, has established with Sonia Gandhi and some ntage of the sound time for alliance

brought about between the two parties, he replied: "I will come into the picture only if Sonia Gandhi and the Rajiv loyalists have to be won over."

Meanwhile, Chandra Shekhar himself has been busy re-establishing links with Sharad Pawar and Patel. What the spr has achieved in the past few weeks is some useful groundwork. It has opened several lines of communication which can be activated the moment the post-election scenario takes shape. The ideal situation for the spr would be if the Congress(I)

fell short of a simple majority. The sjp, with perhaps a paltry 10 to 15 seats, would just have to sit back and wait to be wooed for its favours. The moment would be ripe not just for an alliance but for Chandra Shekhar to be thrust forward as a possible candidate for prime minister. -W.P.S. SIDHU

JANATA DAL

## **Targeting** Saffron

V.P. Singh eases off on the Congress(I)

THE post-Rajiv scenario presented various possibilities to V.P. Singh. Even as he hit the road for the second phase of campaigning after consulting Jyoti Basu, M. Karunanidhi and other National Front leaders it was obvious he had made a shift in strategy.

The most striking fact was the way he stopped harping on the Mandal issue. Significantly he cut out barbs he used to aim at the Congress(I). Instead he kept referring to the rudderless state of the party and trained his guns on the BJP.

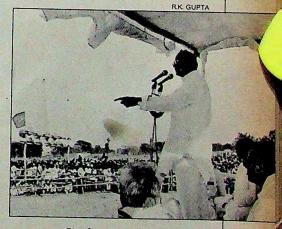
There is a method in Singh's lack of nastiness about the Congress(I). When George Fernandes advocated a tough line on the move to induct Sonia as Congress(I) president. Singh refused. He's even talking of his sacrifices for the Congress(I). This was done to signal that in a post-poll realignment he will not be averse to an anti-BJP arrangement with

Digitized by Arya Sanchiandrad stick Chennai and eGangotri the Congress(I) and perhaps not be entirely unwilling to play a leadership role with Congress(I) backing.

At the initial stage of campaigning, it seemed Singh was not really in control of the Janata Dal with various regional leaders jockeying for crucial positions. Orissa Chief Minister Biju Patnaik for instance had asked Singh not to come to his state for campaigning. But the second phase saw Singh march way ahead. Ajit Singh, who at one stage posed a challenge, has slipped mainly since the Jats in his western Uttar Pradesh stronghold seemed to have turned to the BJP. If eventually Ajit Singh's grip on the party loosens, Singh will be able to patch up with Mulayam Singh Yadav-a move he had to turn down to keep Ajit Singh happy. Dal leaders now see the possibility of a rapprochement.

That leaves only two other leaders of stature who back Singh all the way-Ram Vilas Paswan and Bihar Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav. Said a Dal leader: "Paswan is the most sought after campaigner after Singh." But he has never shown signs of trying to unhook himself from the Singh bandwagon.

The Janata Dal of the next few months could see Singh and Laloo at the helm. Not only is Laloo the unchal-

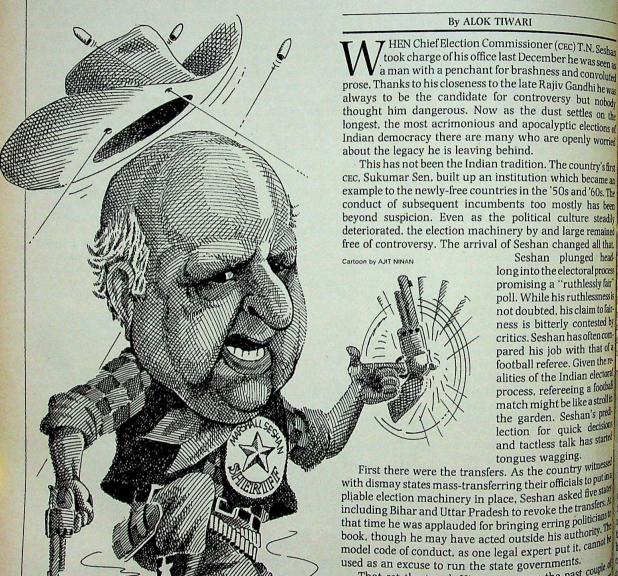


Singh: new tack

lenged leader of the Yadavs, there is no reason to believe he will split with Singh even if he sweeps Bihar. Laloo knows he is at best a regional leader while a large segment of backwards and Muslims back Singh. The National Front-Left combine was hoping to bring in about 140 MPs which could be crucial in a hung Parliament. And anyway Singh is clearly aiming to grab the leadership of a possible anti-BJP front. With a fierce succession feud likely to rattle the Congress(I) the wily raja is planning to emerge as the number one leader of the Centre-Left combine. —BHASKAR ROY Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Channai and eGangotri

# **Sharpshooting Sheriff**

## Rash decisions and tactless talk characterise the poll panel chief



HEN Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) T.N. Seshan took charge of his office last December he was seen as a man with a penchant for brashness and convoluted prose. Thanks to his closeness to the late Rajiv Gandhi he was always to be the candidate for controversy but nobody thought him dangerous. Now as the dust settles on the longest, the most acrimonious and apocalyptic elections of Indian democracy there are many who are openly world

CEC. Sukumar Sen, built up an institution which became an example to the newly-free countries in the '50s and '60s. The conduct of subsequent incumbents too mostly has been beyond suspicion. Even as the political culture steading deteriorated, the election machinery by and large remained free of controversy. The arrival of Seshan changed all that

Seshan plunged headlong into the electoral process promising a "ruthlessly fair" poll. While his ruthlessnessis not doubted, his claim to fairness is bitterly contested by critics. Seshan has often compared his job with that of a football referee. Given there alities of the Indian electora process, refereeing a footbal match might be like a strolle the garden. Seshan's predlection for quick decisions and tactless talk has started

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First there were the transfers. As the country wines with dismay states mass-transferring their officials to pulmi pliable election machinery in place, Seshan asked five state including Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to revoke the transfers. that time he was applauded for bringing erring politicians book, though he may have acted outside his authority. model code of conduct, as one legal expert put it, cannot used as an

That set the trend. His moves over the past couple nths have a couple of the past couple. months have appeared to be at best hasty and at any motivated. The decision to hear the BJP symbol case after the elections, had elections had been announced and then putting of the hearings in the face of agitation by the party was

such. "He was brought in just to harass us."

BJP spokesman K.R. Malkani. The Janata Dal leaders pure disagree with that, saying Seshan only job has been to fix their part They point out Seshan's earlier and hensions about the law and order sind tion in Janata Dal-run Bihar, to the out termanding termanding of elections in five Bihar

INDIA TODAY . JUNE 30, 1991

Pradesh constituencies where the party had a lighting therefore not open to review. In the absence of any case law, One of them is Patna. Says I.K. Gujral, the party there: "His intentions and his credentials have lars been suspect." Gujral accuses Seshan of vengeance his cabinet had shunted Seshan from the top post of inet secretary as "he had politicised the office"

the Congress(I), however, takes a more charitable view of ge. "It is a different election and hence Seshan's conduct not be compared to past CECS," says Congress(I) spokes-Pranab Mukherjee pointing to the lengthy electoral ress, violence, and Rajiv's assassination. But the talk of rosiness between Seshan and his party he calls a canard. daddsthathis party too is unhappy with Seshan on the long monement of elections and the way he is going on ordering oll in booths weeks after the polling.

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d convoluted andhi he was Schan also has a way of entering the legal grey areas. He but nobody intermanded the elections in the five constituencies and ttles on the held that the commission had the powers to review its elections of ndeclsion. However, at least in Meerut and Bulandshahr's enly worried the said the review had vindicated the countermanding rision. Seshan also went on TV openly casting doubts on the ountry's first rarity of his electoral officers. He actually passed strictures n became an inst the returning officer in his ruling on the Meerut nd '60s. The utermand review. Even if true, in its logical conclusion it

demines the commission itself. Says Supreme Court lawyer Rajeev Dhavan: "The counranding was an unbridled usurpation of the role and of returning officers who have been reduced to devance in a manner entirely contrary to the scheme of the mit." Clearly, it was not the decision itself but the way it sarrived at that troubles the lawyers. Seshan's ruling last hight that he had the powers to review the decision also is legal argument. He obviously went along with the ement that being a tribunal the Election Commission had arent powers to review its own decisions. Critics, however, sthat a countermand is like dissolution of the House and

this controversy can only be settled by the Supreme Court. While the criticism of his style and manner may be merited, that of his intentions seems far-fetched. In several cases, Seshan had clear evidence of malpracticesballot papers themseves—even if reports from official channels indicated otherwise.

LSO, Section 58A of Representation of the People Act, 1951. clearly provides the Commission "shall" countermand the elections if it is satisfied that extent of booth capturing is likely to affect the elections. The section, incidentally was introduced by National Front government in 1989. His action definitely has sent a warning out that the sheriff has his fingers on the trigger.

Similarly, Seshan silently endured criticism on the postponement of polls after Rajiv's assassination before finally disclosing that the dates were not his choice but he merely went along with the advice of the Government.

His unconventional style has at least got the parties thinking on reforms to the institution. Gujral says his party is for appointment of a multi-member Election Commission by a panel independent of the Government. BJP Vice-President J.P. Mathur says it is better if cecs are not former bureaucrats and are appointed in consultation with opposition parties. The Congress(I) merely wants a multi-member commission, already provided for in the Constitution.

No matter how hasty his decisions seem, they smack of courage. There is more violence in Indian elections than ever before and Seshan's cowboy tactics can perhaps put the fear of god in the hearts of the goons. History alone will judge whether Seshan has shaken the credibility of the commission, as his critics charge, or has made an active watchdog of an indifferent guardian, as he himself believes. What will remain in memory is his brash image and the unfortunate impression that the commission is no longer above the fray.

 $\bigcap$  0, it is debate time once again. This time the issue is who decided the new dates for the polls. but the controversy is nothing more ban bad communication and a bid the Government to shirk all esponsibility.

What T.N. Seshan, chief election ommissioner, said on June 9 during he Focus programme on Doordarhanwas, "the dates were dictated by be views of the Government". This as created the impression that the st coupled a thied to pass on the buck. And the ewspapers went to town with the ement. But later in the proase and the pro-"advice". He says: "The inavailable led the Governtent to advise me that something triler than middle of June would not

What is surprising is surprising in own tesponsibility. Law Minister Mananian Swamy had told INDIA only two weeks ago that the

POLL SCHEDULE

## Date Snafu

dates were decided by the CEC in the small hours of May 22 in Rashtrapati Bhavan on the basis of information available. He also says the decision was made in the presence of the President, the prime minister, himself. the cabinet secretary, and the CEC.

The reasoning was that the sevenday mourning period meant that polls

The controversy over the poll dates is nothing more than bad communication, and a bid by the Government to shirk responsibility.

could be held only after May 29. Even if they were to be held two days later, it would be May 31 and June 3, leaving too short a time to move security forces to Assam. And polls in Assam could not be shifted because of early monsoons in the state. Hence, mid-June could be the earliest appropriate time. Although some officials favoured earlier dates, nobody could anticipate the situation in the days following the assassination.

It is sound reasoning and that makes the Government's attempt to wriggle out all the more surprising. Perhaps, it was use of the word "dictated" by Seshan that made the Government uncomfortable, leading a spokes woman to call its use unfortunate and inappropriate. What she could have considered was that Seshan had said dates were "dictated by the views of the Government" and not that they were dictated by the Government. A fine distinction but, under the circumstances, an extremely important one.





Terrorist threat looms large even as the army and the police intensify patrolling in the villages

# **Perilous Poll**

## Being held under the shadow of the terrorists' gun, the poll may well backfire

By KANWAR SANDHU

E travels along the rural dustway beside two escort vehicles with machine-gun-toting men. He halts, slinks out of the security cordon, canvasses for votes with only a handful of people, and then rushes back into the safety of his vehicle. Difficult to imagine, yet this is what campaigning in Punjab has been reduced to. The assembly polls are taking place under the shadow of the AK-47s.

Nothing illustrated this more forcefully than the attempt on the life of Union Minister of State for Home Subodh Kant Sahay in Ludhiana on June 7. Sahay was targeted by militants for filing his nomination papers from the Ludhiana Lok Sabha constituency-his candidacy was intended to be a symbolic gesture in support of the sp Government's poll decision (see box). He was on a campaign tour near Gill village when a powerful remote-controlled bomb exploded near his bullet-proof car. Militants then fired at his motorcade.

Sahay's was a miraculous escape.

But militant groups like the Babbar Khalsa, and factions of Khalistan Commando Force, intent on subverting the electoral process. kept systematically mowing down candidates. By June 9th (Nor and th number of contestants killed, including the on tente one for the Lok Sabha, had risen to 20 tts about }

To thwart terrorists, authorities had before identified the 'most vulnerable' cant late.

SUBODH KANT SAHAY

## An Uphill Task

am one of the Bihari labourers come here to work your fields back to prosperity," submitted Union Minister of State for Home Subodh Kant Sahay during the campaign in Ludhiana last fortnight. Whether he succeeds in his peace effort or not his candidature and attempt on his life have definitely enlivened the contest for the Ludhiana Lok Sabha seat.

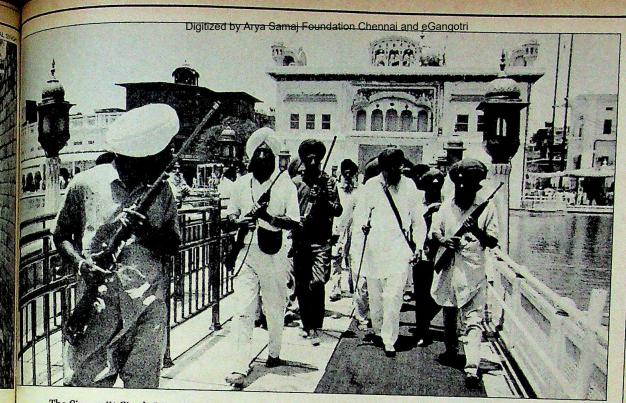
Sahay's main plank is Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's initiative to call for elections in the state and to hold talks with the militants. However,

aside from that he also tries to iden with the local populace. That is whi starts his meetings with Waheguru khalsa (an invocation to the (the Moreover, he continually dwell Guru Gobind Singh's association Patna in his home state. "Likema you I too have borne the lashes police on my back," he inform audiences in an effort to gain empathy.

But his task is clearly an uphil in the constituency which has a cent Sikh vote. Of course, the possibility that this could get among the Akali candidates include Kamikar Singh, a clos ciate of Mann, and the Also Nirmal Singh Dhillon, now in fall

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The Simranjit Singh Mann juggernaut which swept the elections in 1989 is now in reverse gear

s who were provided escort vehi-The other candidates were 'locked in rest houses and police stations. Despite security measures, the milials stepped up violence. Last month Punjab Assembly Speaker Brij shan Mehra and a Punjab Police DIG to their bullets. Amidst this paranoic assphere, voter turnout could not but By June 9th Morand the mandate hollow. People ed, including ston tenterhooks as there were still risen to 20 trabout holding the elections even thorities ball days before the scheduled June 22 rable' candidate.

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The Akalis were not feeling safe either. Even the Akali Dal(M) was forced to order its nominees to: make their own security arrangements; be accompanied by armed men even while going for clandestine confabulations; keep the campaign programme secret and not venture out after nightfall.

THER parties felt that without adequate security, polls will not be fair and free. The inflow of 235 campanies of para-military forces called for was behind schedule. The CPI(M), CPI

and the Janata Dal demanded postponement of polls by three weeks. The Congress(I) had earlier boycotted the elections. But the Election Commission went ahead and even rescheduled polls to the one Lok Sabha and 11 Vidhan Sabha seats that were countermanded earlier.

Party decisions on contesting have been dictated by their poll prospects. With the Congress(I) out of the fray, the BJP's chances have soared. It expects to win about half of the seven Lok Sabha and 60 Vidhan Sabha seats.

The Sikh vote, crucial in 75 of the 117



#### Sahay campaigning in Ludhiana

accused in the Longowal murder case. But one thing is certain: despite the odds Sahay will definitely garner votes of the sizeable migrant labour from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. However, his major stumbling block may prove to be the BIP vote.

Sahay is the bete noire of all the political parties. On the one hand, the BJP accuses him of an 'understanding' with the militants. And on the other the Akalis denounce him as a symbol of repression. The massive security surrounding him-on hindsight, much needed-is yet another handicap for the home minister.

KANWAR SANDHII

Vidhan Sabha constituencies, is no longer consolidated. In 1989, militantsponsored candidates bagged 10 of the 13 Lok Sabha seats. But this time the rural voters are disenchanted with Akali politics. A veritable zoo of Akali factions with tags like (M), (Badal), (Longowal), (Panthic) and (Panthic-R) besides the AISSF (Manjit) are in the fray. They all promise to free the "Sikhs from the shackles of slavery". Their nominees flaunt the bloodied rags of the 'martyrdom' of their kins (see box).

The Mann juggernaut which swept the polls in '89 is in reverse gear. Mann now

promises Sikh masses a utopian Panthic state which will have free trade with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran. With the state facing more mundane problems, his credibility can only slump. The AISSF(M), which started off strongly, too was on slippery ground.

If the main plank of the Akali Dals was Centre-bashing before, it is bash-



There is an absence of campaign bonhomie in the electioneering in rural areas

ing one another now. Mann accuses all others of being the Centre's touts. Badal declares that Mann will wreck the community. And AISSF(M) charges Mann with gobbling money collected during '89 elections.

Consequently, results will differ from '85 assembly elections in which the Akali Dal had won 73 seats, the Congress(I) 32 and the BJP six. Many candidates with local influence, irrespective of their party affliations, will romp home. Post-poll Akali re-alignments can also be predicted.

But nobody can wager on peace. Judging by the number of orchestrated killings so far, the people may be disappointed yet again.



MILITANT CANDIDATES

## **Killer Contests**

WO months ago, members of a powerful militant group met at a hideout to decide on contesting elections. "The crop is ripe and the time right to reap the harvest," said one in favour.

The issue later created sharp divisions but initially there was a scramble among militants and their relatives to get party tickets. Many filed nominations as independents. Around 200 candidates are associated with militancy. Forty are known extremists of which 21 are in jail. The police have rounded up seven other candidates for extortions and other crimes.







(From left) Manjit Singh; Bimal Khalsa, Sawinder Kaur and B.S. Sangha: reaping the harvest

The more prominent militant candidates are:

▶ Bimal Khalsa, widow of Beant Singh, Indira Gandhi's assassin, is contesting as an independent from Ropar. Her rival is her brother-in-law Shamsher Singh.

Resham Singh Malmori, a Manochahal confidant who is in jail, is a Lok Sabha candidate from Tarn Taran. His wife Sawinder Kaur is campaigning for him.

AISSF(M) President Manjit Singh from Valtoha (near Tarn Taran) constituency. He has the support of Manochachal who is the only top militant to have endorsed taking part in polls. He has been appealing to people through the Punjabi press to support his nominees.

► Karamjit Singh, in jail for his attempt on Rajiv Gandhi at Rajghat, is contesting for the Patiala Lok Sabha seat. His main rival for the seat is Amarinder Singh, detained for hijacking a plane to Pakistan.

▶ Balwinder Singh Sangha, brother of slain militant Sukhwinder Singh, is being opposed for Tarn Taran assembly seat by Sukhdev Singh, who claims to have lost eight relatives in police encounters.

—KANWAR SANDHI

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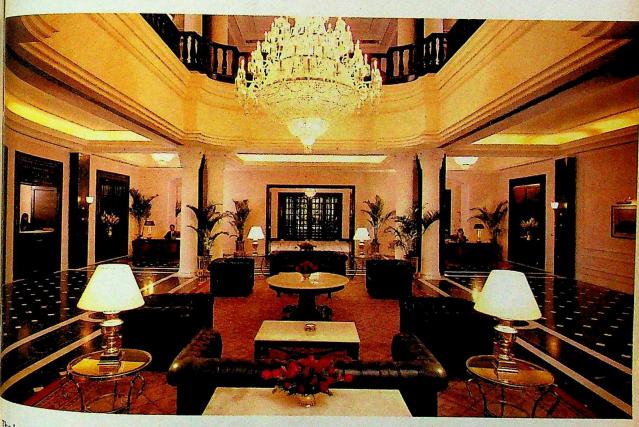
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Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri

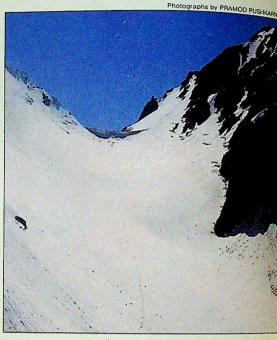
# A Deceptive Calm

Paradoxically while Srinagar limps back to near-normalcy, pro-Pakistani militant groups gain an even firmer foothold.

By W.P.S. SIDHU in Srinagar

CHOOLS, shops and banks are open. There are traffic snarl-ups as buses and trucks clog the narrow roads downtown. In the evenings, children gather in playgrounds to play football. It could be any Indian city. But it's not. It's Srinagar. Once under virtual siege, the capital of Jammu & Kashmir shows signs of normalcy as the summer of '91 settles in. Militant-sponsored bandhs are now rare. So too are official curfews.

But the calm is deceptive. Long and bloody encounters between the security forces and the militants, the continuous influx of heavily armed groups across the porous Line of Actual Control (LAC) and the dramatic rise of numerous pro-Pakistan groups, tell another story. For pro-Pakistan militants have defiantly moved to centre stage with a series of dramatic killings and yet another sensational kidnapping, this time round of a couple of Swedes working on the Uri hydel power project. And with the pro-independence Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) having fallen out of favour with their Pakistani mentors, the pro-Pakistan groups, particularly the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen.



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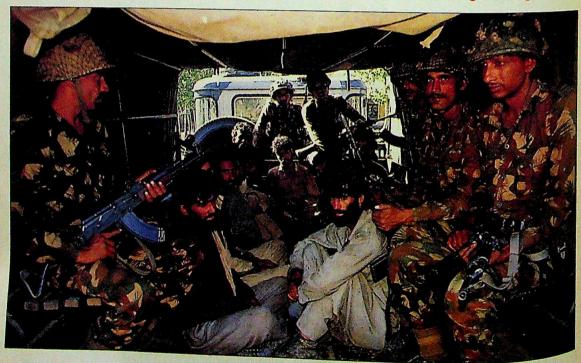
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Footprints of militants at Eagle Pass

Armed groups are crossing via tough routes.



Militants captured by the army in an ambush on the Indo-Pak border

Security forces have arrested only thirty per cent of the trained terrorists.

38 INDIA TODAY ◆ JUNE 30, 1991

are now calling the shots.

Digitized by Arya Samaj Found to the name of the same security forces to the last JKLF man and they will then get the Hizb-ul to attack and take control."

The pro-Pakistan organisations have been making a oncerted effort to isolate the JKLF completely. An emascuated JKLF, with most of its leaders dead or behind bars, has not been able to counter the challenge. Differences between be JKIF and the pro-Pakistan militants broke out following a gries of anti-Pakistan demonstrations around the end of April, organised by the JKLF and National Conference memters. The Hizb-ul Mujahideen and the Muslim Janbaz Force (MF) retaliated by sponsoring a number of pro-Pakistan emonstrations. Although the JKLF has been trying to show hatitis far from being a spent force, most Kashmir observers tel that it is fighting for its survival. Intelligence officials also ay its supply of arms from Pakistan has been drastically artailed because of its anti-Jamat and anti-Pakistan stand. The beneficiary has been the Hizb-ul Mujahideen. According wone estimate, it obtained 1,500 AK-47 rifles. Says Governor

MULTANEOUSLY. other pro-Pakistan (but not necesarily pro-Jamat groups) such as the Al-Umer Mujahideen, the MJF and Operation Balakote, have also launched high-profile actions. The MJF, for instance, shot into the limelight when it kidnapped two Swedes-Johan Jansson and Johan-Ole Loman-who were working at the 480 Mw Uri hydel power project. Their objective: to attract international attention to the Kashmir situation. But the United Nations and Amnesty International refused to react.

Similarly, the Al-Umer Mujahideen, notorious for eliminating mukhbirs (informers) by tying bombs around their victims and blasting them to pieces, has started hitting political targets. In the past month it has assassinated

THE ARMY

## Challenge in the Mountains

N the morning of May 5, Naik Subedar P.B. Chettri of Assam Rifles led his platoon up to Dudhi in Tangdhar sector, expecting nothing but empty huts covered in knee-deep snow. What he found instead was a large group of heavily-armed militants taking a break after crossing over from the 14,000-ft high Eagle Pass.

utes.

When challenged, the militants opened fire. Two of Chettri's men were hit, but the doughty Gurkha ordered counter-attack. while

radioing Chowkibal base for reinforcements. Help arrived, but only six hours later, to the 10,500-ft spot.

The subedar's men hung on grimly. In the 72-hour encounter that followed—the longest since Operation Rakshak was launched against trained militants from across the line of actual control (LAC)—the battle went the way of the army. Even though as many as 73 militants were killed and 15 were arrested, 84 managed toescape. The encounter was much easier on the armyonly two riflemen were killed and one injured.

In fact, of the 10 major interceptions so far, only four encounters (including the one at Dudhi) have yielded an average of 50 militants killed or arrested. The other encounters have been at Gund and Gaggangir, Sonapandi Gali, and Telel Valley (Kaobal Gali). In the Seven months of the operation, the army has arrested over 1,400 militants while 442 have either been killed or have died due to bad weather. The army itself has lost 36 men while 77 have been wounded. Over 1,200

ROUTES OF INFILTRATION MAJOR ENCOUNTERS PAKISTAN Sonapindi Gali Lolab Valley Kupwara SRINAGAR KASHMIR (INDIA) Punch 0

> AK-47s have been recovered—enough to arm an Indian Army regiment.

> But as even officials admit, this is a mere 30 per cent of the potential trouble from across the LAC. Perhaps this is because, out of the 72 known routes across the LAC the army can cover only 50. Army intelligence also points to the altered tactics used to push the militants across the border. Where earlier they would come along nullahs, now they move across ridges, slopes and even snowcovered mountain passes. Moreover, since December last year, they have been coming in larger groups, seemingly with the intention of overwhelming the army. But after the Dudhi fiasco, the militants seem to have reverted to crossing over in smaller groups.

> With regular shelling on Indian positions by Pakistani forces, army officials fear the coming months will be tough on them, as in Bugina, in March-end, where four Sikh infantry men died in an all-out assault. Clearly, hard times lie ahead. -W.P.S. SIDHU on the LAC

Sheikh Sadiq, a cousin of former chief minister Farookh Abdullah, Gulam Mohammed Bande, a National Conference activist who organised the anti-Pakistan demonstrations in Srinagar, and Hisamuddin Bande, a former minister under G.M. Shah.

Yet another significant development among the militant groups has been the metamorphosis of the Jammu & Kashmir Students Liberation Front (IKSLF) into the Ikhwan-e-Muslameen (Muslim brotherhood). Speaking to INDIA TODAY from his Srinagar hideout, Hilal

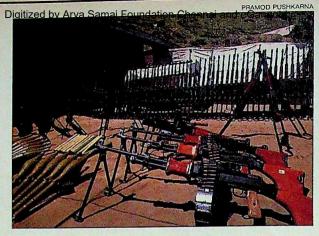
Beg, the mastermind behind the Rubaiya and Nahida kidnappings, explains the rationale behind the new identity: "The credit for our actions used to go to the IKLF. Moreover. the JKLF chairman is secular minded. We are not. We believe in the law of Allah."

For the time being, however, all the groups are working to a grand design drawn up by their Pakistani handlers. Pakistan is pulling out all the stops in what is described as a

high intensity proxy war. They are now sending across a variety of stateof-the-art equipment ranging from the Israeli made Uzi submachine guns to Chinese RPGs with night firing capability. Says a top official in Srinagar: "For Pakistan it is now or never. They will do their damnedest to retain the initiative.'

Firing along the LAC, a rare phenomenon in the past, has almost become a daily occurrence. And while the fire used to be concentrated in certain confined areas, it is now virtually all along the 640-kilometer-long LAC, with a couple of vulnerable posts coming under strong attack by Pakistani Army regulars (see box).

The objective of this exercise is two-fold. First, to assure the militants in the Valley of support and second, to provide covering fire for the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (рок) trained militants to infiltrate the Valley with their sophisticated arms. With the onset of summer this ex-



State-of-the-art weapons seized

#### There is a spurt in the supply of arms to militants.

Saxena: "Earlier, these camps were very patchy. Now there is an attempt to organise them professionally.'

And with dedicated militants pouring in across the border, and being trained within the Valley, the local authorities are fighting a rearguard action. Saxena is now content with keeping violence to "manageable" proportions. The recent case of indiscriminate firing by a CRPF platoon at Khanyar, which left 16 people dead brought forth

charges that the paramilitary was behaving like an occupation force under siege and was seen as a major setback for the administration. It also brought back memories of the indiscriminate firing the mourners of Mirwaiz Maulvi Farookh last year, which left 57 dead and cost Jagmohan the governorship. This time round, the populace simply decided to boycott the official inquiry into the firing and extended its cooperation to an unofficial inquiry con-Justice by ducted Bahuddin Farooqi.

ercise has resulted in the

passage of an estimated

5,000 militants from POK.

had only limited success,

as a senior army officer

admits: "It is impossible to

seal off the border with

Pakistan. Moreover, the

militants now coming

across are a hardened lot

who have got better train-

ing and are willing to use

tougher routes." Intelli-

gence sources also reveal

the existence of fully-

fledged training camps

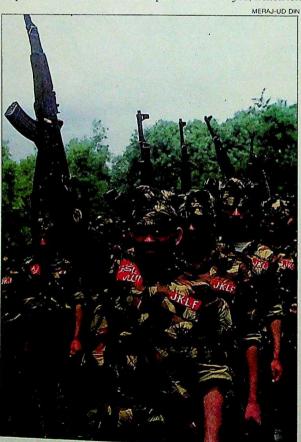
within the Valley where

new cadres are being in-

ducted. Says Governor

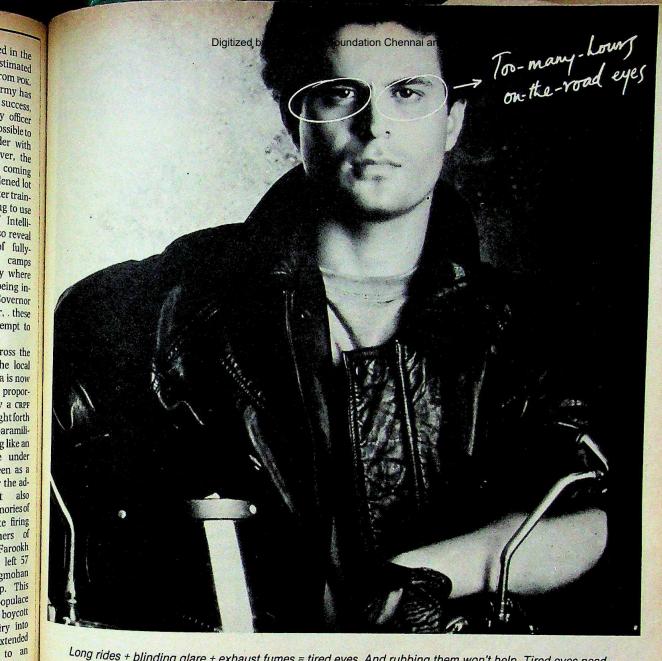
The Indian Army has

Against a background of dangerously low credibility among the local populace and the ascendency of well equipped militants. pro-Pakistan are authorities bracing themselves for the a renewed onslaught in the coming months. Their success or failure in the face of this awesome challenge will determine the political future of the strife torn Valley and its people.



JKLF cadres being trained in the Valley

The JKLF is losing ground to pro-Pak groups.



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# FITTING THE PIECES

By SHEKHAR GUPTA with ANAND VISWANATHAN and KAVITHA SHETTY

EVER in the history of the subcontinent has a manhunt of such magnitude been launched. Nearly 200 of India's best detectives, forensic and explosives experts have been working 20-hour days, for weeks, to solve one of the most complex murder jigsaws in recent decades.

With the claws of the conspiracy

spread across international waters, clues have not come by easily—the CBI even approached Interpol for help in the investigation-leading to widespread speculation in the media, which either caused confusion or fouled up progress through premature leaks. Muddying the waters further, politicians have been flinging wild accusations and heaping blame on all kinds of groups-from Israel's Mossad to the CIA, the DMK and the BJP.

Yet behind the commotion, the Spe-

cial Investigation Team set up by the on was engaged in chasing up hundreds d leads every day. The progress has been slow. But last fortnight, as vital clus surfaced in Madras, Colombo and Varuniya (in northern Sri Lanka), the neede of suspicion seemed to point firmly to Jaffna, confirming the original belief that the killing was the handiwork of the LTTE. The crime displayed the hallmarks of an LTTE operation: a suicide squad and cutouts to wipe out the trails. The killings of

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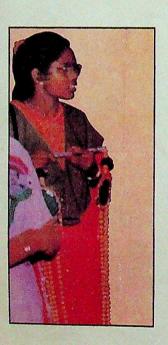
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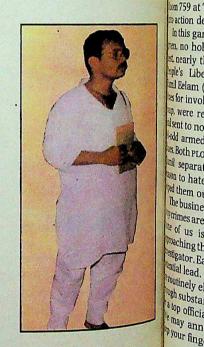
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இத்திய உயர்ஸ்தானிகர் காரியாலயம், இலங்கை : தொலைபேரி இல. 421605, 422787 இலக்கை குற்றவியல் புலனாய்வுத் திணைக்களம் : தொலைபேடு இல. 20141—20145. 422176 மதுரை பொலிஸ் : 839001, 839095

Indian Authorities has offered a Reward of Indian Rs. 500,000/for any information leading to the identification of anyone of the persons appearing in the photograph, whom they suspect to have been involved in the assassination of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India.

All information will be kept strictly confidential and such information may be furnished to the following telephone

Indian High Commission la Sri Lanka: Telephone Nos.: 421605, 422787 C.L.D., Sri Lanka: 20141 to 20145, 422176 Madras Police: 839001, 839095



The air-dropping of thousands of leaflets over north-east Lanka, which is inaccessible to the investigators, has begun yielding results pointing the needle of suspicion at the LTTE. paratively simpler as the police got at tone conspirator alive.

#### INVESTIGATION entification by elimination

MILIGAI. The stately building on Greenways Road in south Mahundreds of sis the hub of the manhunt. Everygabout Case No. 329/91 registered ess has been iperumbudur is unprecedented: the of killing, the reward offered the composition and quality of the m assembled.

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wisthemethod of investigation, the blood of which are the three teleme lines that keep buzzing. A dozen officials man 839067, 839001 and 1017 throughout the day. Each day nes in about a hundred calls. Eight ndred kilometres south of Madras, in mbo another half a dozen telephone waremanned with the same alacrity. ry new lead, "even a fraction of a metre" of evidence, has S.K. Dutta, itional director of the CBI, staying in m759 at Taj Samudra hotel, spring oaction despite his broken ankle.

h this game, no quarters are being n, no holds barred. At India's best nearly three dozen men from the ple's Liberation Organisation of lelam (PLOTE), jailed in the Malsor involvement in the attempted were released last week, armed dent to north-east Sri Lanka to join ad armed EPRLF men to hunt for s. Both PLOTE and EPRLF, once strong separatist organisations, have on to hate the LTTE, which all but d them out in fratricidal battles.

The business is boring, not quite the orimes are solved in thrillers. "Since of us is Perry Mason, we are roaching this the hard way," says an stigator. Each call is followed up as a alial lead. By nightfall, 99 per cent noutinely eliminated. But there was substance in the investigations op official to cautiously declare: may announce something soon. your fingers crossed."

### "ONE-EYED JACK" he first breakthrough

Soften happens in complicated the first real breakthrough to be coming from a lead which bilially ignored as being of no when the investigators the first pictures of the alleged the woman carrying the lanked by Latha Kannan and daughter Kokila, both Congress



Sudha (left); Nalini: possible accomplices of the back-up assassination team

#### **The Vital Clues**



The Fourth Man: The man holding the notebook has been identified as Raghuappa alias Mathimagan, a known LTTE cadre. The bulge under his kurta suggests that he may have also carried a bomb. A key to the mystery, he could be killed by the LTTE or may simply disappear in Jaffna.



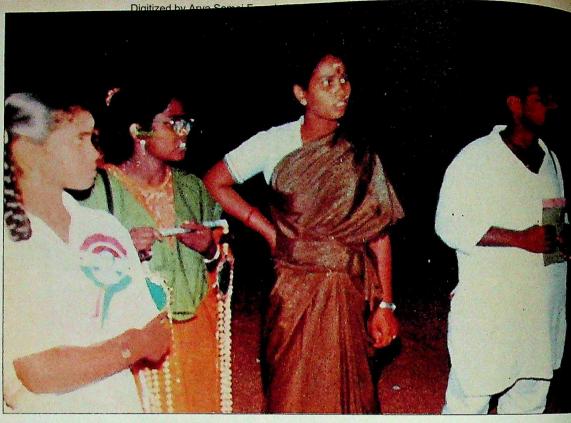
The Human Bomb: Identified as a member of the LTTE's women's wing, who used to ride a bicycle in Vavuniya with "Nalayani" written on it. But, in keeping with the LTTE tradtition Nalayani could be her pseudonym. So the lead dries up unless her real name and family connections can be found.



Haribabu: Investigators say he had LTTE links, but reckon the assassins may have used him as a cover of sorts since he could pass off as a photographer. His antecedents may yield more, but the LTTE's past record suggests he may have been just a cut-out with little knowledge of the operation.



Jayabalan and the Bomb: The explosive was RDX of C4 kind and could have come from Singapore. E. Jayabalan, a Frankfurt-based chemical engineer, and LTTE explosives expert flew into Madras on April 21 with an LTTE man Nixon, visited Porur and Trichy. Four take passports were seized from the Trichy address.



workers-they had deliberately cut out of the frame the short, stocky, bespectacled and kurta-pyjama-clad man sporting a gold chain and a writing pad. It was only later, when investigators the realised he wasn't a journalist, that the picture was given a closer scrutiny. Enlargements of small sections of the kurta, using specialised cameras, showed a tell-tale bulge, indicating that he too was wearing something, presumably another belt-bomb, on his body.

Soon a lowly LTTE functionary, who was on a routine supply run to the Tamil Nadu coast, and picked up near Nagapattinam, identified the fourth man as a key LTTE operative. He was known as One-Eyed Jack as one of his eyes, damaged in an explosion, had been replaced with a glass prosthesis.

Immediately there was a buzz among the Colombo-based anti-LTTE Tamil circles as well. Sitharthan, chief of the political wing of PLOTE, confirmed that one of his aides. Babu, who had been in the IPKF's custody in Vavuniya. remembered seeing a one-eyed man fitting the description in the camp. Babu. however, told INDIA TODAY in Colombo

#### THE KEY PICTURE

- The clothes—unusual in rural Tamil Nadu, suggest the man and woman used the ploy of looking like important outsiders, to gain access.
- The unprofessional way the man holds the notebook—and no pen—raises suspicions.
- His kurta bulging at the walst, indicates there may have been a stand-by explosive belt.
- The assassin's bag, later found with Latha (extreme right), indicates she got rid of it, to ease her way close to Rajiv, suggesting complicity.

that he had heard the man had died while leading an LTTE attack. But information came in from elsewhere as well and the investigators seemed reasonably convinced that the fourth man was none other than Raghuappa alias Mathimagan. It is still unclear which one is the real name and which one the nom de guerre, the warrior's pseudonym. But he is believed to have had a hand in the killing of EPRLF's K. Padmanabha in Madras and was thought to be planning to kill Perumal, the EPRLF chief currently hiding in the anonymity of Dandakaranya forests in Madhya Pradesh.

But the lead could dry up. What if the

man has reached Jaffna, tak ing advantage of the first 48 hours of confusion? The coast is less than a six-hour drive from Sriperumbudur and the Tigers' speedboats could in him to Jaffna and safetyinles than two hours. Knowing that he is one of the very les survivors able to unrard what could otherwise prove to be an eternal mystery, the LTTE might well liquidate him. Such is the CBI's despert tion that K. Karthikeyan, the inspector general heading the team, even offered to got Jaffna himself to pursue the

lead, only to be told by the Sri Lanke authorities that they did not wish to ke 'an accessory to his murder.'

#### GIRL ON THE BICYCLE The key to the mystery?

71TH only a dismembered header V three limbs to work on, the interest tigators have had a hard time tring identify the woman who combined to mikaze motivation with a high-level training. training. But this piece of the pure seems seems to be falling into place members of PLOTE, including a mode and herders. and her daughter, once picked up by

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# NE CONSPIRACY Startling Breakthrough

IECES of the complex jigsaw began falling into place with the arrest of S. Bhagyanathan. 5, owner of a printing press called Allround Stationers, Letters, Press and Binds and his mother Padma, 49, in Madras. They were charged with harbouring the key conspirators, including the human omb, now identified as Shalini alias while alias Thanu, member of the ITTE suicide squad Shadow.

Detectives say at least nine accomplices have been identified: Thanu and the kurta-pyjama-clad man now also known to have the alias of Sivarasan, Haribabu, Nalini and Subha, Bhagyanathan, Padma and two others.

The breakthrough came when Ravi Shankar, the freelance photogapher from whom Haribabu is said b have borrowed the camera, rerealed to the CBI that Shubham Photo Agency in Madras was the hub of LTTE activity in Madras.

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By grilling Shubha Sundaram the agency proprietor, detectives Were able to reach Bhagyanathan. It was discovered that the press owned <sup>by Bh</sup>agyanathan was actually under benami ownership, the real pro-Mictor being Balasubramaniam las Baby, a close aide or Pirabakaran. Not surprisingly it was initing LTTE literature. The detecwes also established that:

The assassin and Raghu alias Miyarasan had stayed in Bhagyanahan's Vilivakkam house for 40 days. Two other accomplices, Subha and Nalini, whose photograph has Now been released, had also stayed in he same house. Their names crop-Rdup during interrogation of other ecognised them from a picture of the Towd taken by Haribabu.

The suspects had gone to Tiruhinacar hired by Bhagyanathan. Haribabu's involvement was than coincidental. The ten in his roll have obviously a shot to keep a record of the an LTTE practice.

Ravi Shankar's wedding album



Bhagyanathan, an alleged accomplice being taken to court

showed the presence of Bhagyanathan, Nalini and some other LTTE contacts. He also used to go to Colombo to stay with his girlfriend Leela.

About 35 people have been held by SIT for questioning. This includes Madhur Nayakam, a lawyer and an LTTE supporter from Trichy. It is suspected that two persons had informed him of the success of the operation and that someone might come to him for medical treatment.

Another key discovery was from the examination of two unexploded grenades left behind at the site of the killing of EPRLF chief K. Padmanabha in Madras. The grenades contained RDX of C4 grade was presumably from the same lot as the one used at Sriperumbudur. It pointed to a common hand—the LTTE.

Investigators say the arrest of Subha and Nalini and perhaps even the so-called one-eyed jack is a matter of time. But the establishment of the motive and the involvement of LTTE high command will still be complicated. -ANIRUDHYA MITRA

LTTE claim that they were interrogated in Vavuniya by the woman fitting the description of the human bomb. Other operatives from the EPRLF and PLOTE have also confirmed that she was seen in Vavuniya, riding a bicycle, the name Nalayani emblazoned on its mudguard. Other names thrown up in the investigation are Shalini, Shaloo and Thanu which could all be pseudonyms. She was believed to be a member of the LTTE's suicide wing called Shadow.

Immediately the investigators were scouring the group photographs of the LTTE women's wing, released by the Tigers' propaganda machinery, as well as those in possession of the IPKF. Forensic and explosives experts picked up hundreds of the minutest pieces of her denim belt over a week-long vacuumcleaning of the site and pieced together almost all of its front, including the white detonator wire and the electric wire connecting it to the toggle-type twin switch. The steel pellets were apparently bought from a hardware store-identified as those used to grind paints.

The absence of ear-rings from the head was no mystery as these had been removed during the post-mortem and now are part of the case property. The bindi that is seen on the dead woman's forehead but not in the picture taken Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennal and eGangotiminutes before the blast is ascribed to different camera angle. Apost

SPECIAL INVESTIGATION TEAM

## A Formidable Group

NLIKE the SIT headed by S. Anand Ram that had investigated the assassination of Mrs Indira Gandhi and reported to the cabinet secretary and the home minister, the new team under Inspector General D.R. Karthikevan, is work-

ing as a cell within the CBI, under the overall supervision of the CBI Director Vijay Karan and one of its Additional Directors S.K. Dutta. That is why all the members of the core group of the sit have been drawn from the CBI. Karthikeyan and Senior Superintendent R.V. Raju have been co-opted into the CBI from the CRPF and Jammu & Kashmir Police, respectively. The team also consists of the best forensic, fingerprint and photography experts. "Practically every Tamil speaker of competence in his specific field in the cBI is working on the case," said an officer. RAW is looking into the International ramifications of the case, including the possibility that the RDX was bought from Singapore.

The team was drawn up on May 22 by Vijay Karan on the advice of other officials. The first criterion was to have officials familiar with the coastal districts infested by LTTE militants in Tamil Nadu and other parts. The second was their known ability for handling terrorist cases.

The following are the key members of the team:

 D.R. Karthikeyan, of 1964 batch from the Karnataka cadre. His last posting being IG (south) of the CRPF in Hyderabad, he has spent most of his three decades of service in the various intelligence wings of the police. He was DIG (Intelligence) in the early

'80s in Karnataka.

 Amod Kanth earned fame in the Delhi Police by solving the mystery of the transistor bomb blasts that killed 105 people in 1985. He spent the next six years in the crime branch—the longest tenure for any officer, during

which many more cases were solved with the arrest of several Punjab terrorists.

Amit Verma, 1978 batch. Tamil Nadu cadre, sp, cBI: one of the more successful detectives of the CBI, Verma has served in Tamil Nadu as sp in Kanyakumari and Tuticorin.

His department had processed several cases including the forged letter sent by Devi Lal, and the HDW submarine deal.

Verma has been drafted into the SIT for his fluent Tamil and his knowledge of Tamil Nadu's coastal districts. He has maintained contacts in areas haunted by Tamil militants.

 Radha Vinod Raju. IPS, 1975 batch, I&K cadre, was DIG, Anantanag. He was drafted into the cBI two days after the assassination so that he could be accommodated in the sir.

 Purshottaman, the DSP who is officially the investigating officer on the case, cracked the famous Rashid murder case in Bangalore.

The core group of the SIT is also being helped by the LITE desk of the CBI's anti-terrorist cell which comprises S. Ramani, DIG; V. Balasubramaniyam, Salim Ali, and R. Balaji, all SPs. Even critics admit that this is perhaps the best team the CBI could have assembled, as it seems to have the expertise and the motivation. All it needs is a bit of luck.

ANIRUDHYA MITRA

different camera angle. Another discov. ery is that the bag seen slung on he shoulder before the blast, is seen hang ing from Latha Kannan's body, indica ing that she had given it to her thus suggesting a degree of familiarity.

Given the confusion immediately after the blast, the CBI is fortunate that the pieces of her body are still in fairly good shape. Initially they had been stuffed into a gunny bag and left in corner of the morgue with nothing but few chunks of ice thrown over them. few more hours' delay and the body would have rotten completely, wiping out any traces of valuable evidence.

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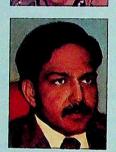
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At Madras Medical College, dental surgeons have established her age to be 25 years. Since her left hand has been found, the entire palm has been fingerprinted. But investigators have not had much luck with the finger-print records of Sri Lankan Tamil militants prepared in 1986 when MGR had decided to arrest them in a swoop,

#### THE FREE-LANCE **PHOTOGRAPHER** An expendable cut-out?

THREE weeks ago this little, rundown house in the Madras suburb of West Saidapet was just another nondescript dwelling. Few people trod the rocky incline that led to the house from the road. Today, this house is the focus of world media attention. Every Saidapet urchin knows Haribabu's house. In room on a shelf is a framed photograph of Haribabu facing a colour photograph of Rajiv. Haribabu, 23, who said he'db a famous photographer one day, be came famous all right, if only in death The sequence of eight pictures from his Pentax, borrowed from a photographa called Ravi Shankar, who is now being interrogated by the CBI, gives the out lead to the assassin. "My Babu Wa innocent, some people have led himin this." says his mother, Rukmini. Investigators think she may be both

right and wrong. Haribabu, they say was definitely mixed up with "the types". It is possible that he was un aware of the intentions of his accomplices but the more acceptable theory now is that he was an active accomplice and perhaps could not go away in time. It is clear that he no closely associated with S. Bhagas nathan, the printing press owner of rested as one of the alleged conspirate But why take pictures that provide such vital evidence to the srr? Whatever the reason, the providential survival of his





(From top) D.R. Karthikeyan, Amod Kanth and **Amit Verma:** meticulous investigation

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The SIT sources say that with the

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Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennal and

Though Haribabu's mother vehemently denies his involvement with the Tigers, the investigators are now quite certain of it.

been, the bomb would never have got past a metal detector. The major mystery now is the LTTE's motive, particularly after reports that it had re-estab-

#### KASI ANANDHAN Peace messenger or red herring?

lished links with Rajiv.

N the Sri Lankan Tamil circles Kasi Anandhan was never taken seriously as a political figure. A former member of the TULF and now on the LTTE's central

Parsi Killing Force for the IPKF. It was a bit surprising for a key member of the family owning The Hindu group of newspapers that Anandhan came forward, seeking help to meet Indian political leaders, on behalf of the LTTE to rebuild bridges with India. Rajiv readily agreed. I. K. Gujral refused to meet him. His attempts to approach the BJP on the pretext that Hindu temples were being demolished by the Sri Lankan Army in Jaffna too were discouraged. He only met Rajiv on March 5. What transpired is controversial.

committee, he was famous for what he

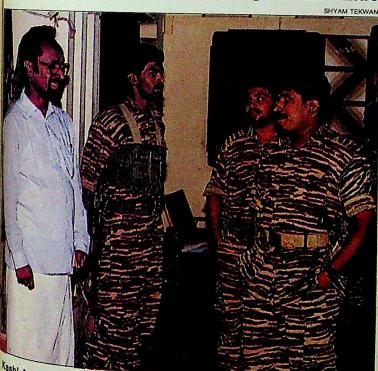
did best: writing rabble-rousing poetry.

An example is the expression Italian-

The pro-LTTE view is that Rajiv was sympathetic, conveyed his "fraternal greetings" to Velupillai Pirabhakaran and asked him to continue his struggle. Since the meeting went off so well, could the LTTE have killed him? Congress(I) sources say it is more likely that Rajiv explained the position taken by his party in its manifesto, that the Tamils should be prepared to live within Sri Lanka but with greater autonomy. Sri Lankan government spokesmen assert that their deputy high commissioner in New Delhi ran into Rajiv at a function on March 10 and, talking about Ranjan Wijeratne's assassination, Rajiv said it had to be the handiwork of the LTTE "who are a treacherous bunch of people". The deputy high commissioner shot off a cable to Foreign Secretary Bernard Tilakratne in Colombo (cable no. 222 of March 10) recounting the conversation. If the meeting had indeed gone so well, would Rajiv have used such words for the LTTE, especially while talking to a Lankan diplomat?

#### LTTE'S MOTIVES Eye on the future

NDIAN investigators share the Sri Lankan officials' view that the Anandhan visit was a red herring.



<sup>Kashi</sup> Anandhan (left) with Mahattya (centre) and other LTTE leaders

The Kasi Anandhan-Rajiv meeting was Possibly planned to provide the LTTE with a plausible denial after the assassination.

partly to secure plausible deniability after the assassination. If the LTTE was indeed behind the killing, the truth may not even be known to Anandhan himself as he too may have been used as a cut-out, genuinely believing that he was on a peace mission to build bridges, assuming that Rajiv would be returning to power after the elections.

Analysts, including Sri Lankan

motive. One, that Pirabhakaran had felt humiliated when Rajiv invited him to Delhi in 1987 and put him virtually under house arrest until he signed the peace accord. "He has to be taught a lesson," he is believed to have told an associate. More pressing than vengeance, however, could be the LTTE ideologues' calculation that Eelam would not be possible as long as India

Partly to throw Rajiv off-gight Aryan Salva Good to the the control of the contro seemed to them the only leader with a trans-Vindhyas appeal, capable of keep ing the south and the north of India together, and thus a long-term impediment to Eelam. His absence could help them exploit ethnic sympathies in Tani Nadu. The short-term damage—loss of sympathy would then be more than offset by the long-term gains from the assassination, thus sealing Rajiv's fale.

# **Cyanide Warriors**

HIS Tiger got his first taste of blood at the age of 19. On July 27, 1973 Velupillai Pirabhakaran levelled his gun at A. Duraiappa, the Tamil mayor of Jaffna and shot to kill, beginning one of the most remarkable careers in the international history of guerrilla warfare. This led to the evolution of a

militant organisation whose 10,000odd armed members swear loyalty to none else than their commander, a wise old veteran at 37, and prefer to swallow cyanide rather than be taken captive.

Born in a fisherman's family of the backward Karaiyarar caste

Velvettithurai, widely known as the smugglers' village in Jaffna peninsula Pirabhakaran was brought up on a steady dose of stories about the gloryd Tamil history and so impressed was he. that later he often compared himself to the legendary Chola king, Karikalan. At 16, he dropped out of school to

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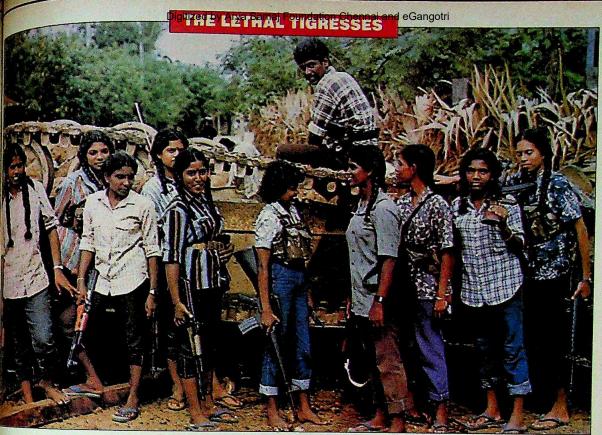
KISS OF DEATH

(Left to right) Sri Sabaratnam, Pirabhakaran, Balakumar and Padmanabha: deadly truce

After ostensible unity, Pirabhakaran had Sri Sabaratnam of TELO and Padmanabha of EPRLF eliminated, while Balakumar of EROS is now believed to be under house arrest by LTTE in Jaffna.

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The LTTE women: trained to kill without remorse

The more than 3,000 full-time women activists of the LTTE display the same motivation, power and commitment as their male counterparts and have an equal share in guerrilla operation.

and his Tamil New Tigers (TNT). The bite of that acronym was to prove the tigers grew to become most consummate explosives extended in the shadowy world of international terrorism.

from TNT to RDX has been a squered history for the Tigers. In the st for supremacy that began nearly years ago, Pirabhakaran's men devoured the frontline leadership the other major Tamil guerrilla softhe Jaffna peninsula barring a few skan Army.

The Tiger of the state of the s

Army.

The Tigers' high motivation is bafflers' high movement lacks religions of ideological content. In fact the initial inspiration for sepantame from Christian pastors in a lamil groups which began as left-

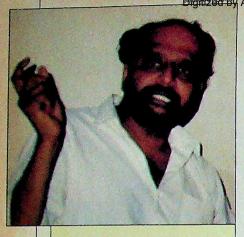
ists, have shown an amazingly practical ambidexterity. Former Sri Lankan defence minister Lalith Athulathmudali, who led a bloody war against the LTTE, ascribes it to Pirabhakaran's effective articulation of Naangal Tamilar (we are Tamil) kind of pride. His personal charisma and mystique has convinced cadres of the ultimate inevitability of Eelam.

Pirabhakaran picks his recruits young, predominantly in the 12-13 range. These children are already aware of hardship and the atrocities of Sri Lankan soldiers. Training is completed by an oath of personal loyalty to Pirabhakaran and the gift of a cyanide capsule to the new guerrilla on his behalf. The credo of the Pirabhakaran cult is not death-or-glory. It seems to be death-and-glory. Less than three months ago some LTTE boys rammed a truck loaded with explosives into the Sri Lankan Army camp at Mankulam, pay-

ing the way to a total Tiger victory. The first suicide attack was reported in 1984 when guerrillas in a jeep loaded with explosives drove into the Chavakacheri police station near Jaffna, killing 29.

Pirabhakaran has been publicity shy and has rarely opened up to researchers or journalists. But supposedly he opted for the cyanide cult in 1974 when Sivakumaran, a young Tamil activist, became the first to swallow poison rather than be arrested. Glorification of death became the LTTE's credo from then on, building up today into the cadres' rather casual attitude to death—the enemy's or their own.

The 3,000-strong women's wing is equally motivated. Skilled in close combat, they form a part of the LTTE's suicide squad, the Black Tigers. Adele Balasingham, 41, the Australian wife of LTTE ideologue Anton, is the unofficial head of the women's wing. She also edits



"LTTE is no longer a revolutionary movement. Now it is more like a mafia."

DHARMALINGAM SITHADTHAN. **PLOTE** leader

the official LITE organ, Voice of Tigers.

The LTTE works in tight horizontal compartments with very few vertical links and thus little is known about its structure and operations. The fact that almost all its senior leaders including Pirabhakaran hail from Velvettithurai has led to the group being branded as a 'mafia' set-up by rivals.

Though the LTTE has a central committee, Pirabhakaran depends largely on a small group of close associates for consultation. Some of these associates like "Baby" Subramaniam, who is the rebels' main emissary in Tamil Nadu, have made valuable contacts with groups like the chauvinistic Dravidar Kazhagam, are hardly known outside. Dissent is silenced brutally, often with a bullet in the head. It is said to have recently killed "Senkathir", a central committee member.

The money for arms comes from drug smuggling, havala rackets, extortions and donations from expatriate Tamils. The LTTE is even known to run a benami shipping line with at least three fair-sized ships. Arms are often bought in Europe, or through Taiwan or Hong Kong-based traders, then shipped to Singapore where bills of loading and containers are changed and are then transferred to smaller boats on the high seas near Sri Lanka.

Investigations conducted by Interpol last year revealed that 80 per cent of

ENGRESTED ATTERS ATTERS

abroad for drug-trafficking are reported to be Tamils. The Washington Post and Bogota's Spanish paper El-Tiempo first busted the Tigers' links with Colombia's notorious Medellin Cartel. In return for helping the cartel by pushing dope in Europe, the LTTE's men were to be trained at a military tactics school in Antigua, in the Caribbean. The trainer was none else than a retired Israeli Army Colonel Yayir Klein. In By Way of Deception, Mossad renegade Victor Ostrovsky has admitted to the Israelis training both the Sri Lankan security forces and the Tigers. According to him, to the Tigers by the Israelis.

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In the peninsula the Tigers collect taxes as any government would. They also raise money by running a the most elaborate havala racket. A majority of the lakhs of Sri Lankan Tamils spread the world over prefer to send money through LTTE contacts. The LTTE keeps the foreign exchange, delivering the equivalent in rupees back home. Lately there have also been complaints of extortion from expatriate Tamils. Last year the Danish police unearthed an extor. tion campaign in which lakhs of dollars were collected from terrified Tamils by

IPKF

# **Vicious Experience**

HERE is a story the Sri Lankan Army officers recount often. A Lankan colonel, in a conversation with an IPKF major, cautioned him against the LTTE expertise with mines and explosives. The major brushed aside the fears saying the Indian Army had the experience of Nagaland and Mizoram. "But the problem is, each one of the Tamils you are fighting here has A-levels in science," said the Sri Lankan. Next week, after three Indian vehicles had been blown up by the Tigers using improvised explosive devices, the IPKF sent for the Lankan colonel for advice.

No army that suffered 4,000 casualties in a low-intensity conflict in two years will ever forget the experience. Even today the lessons of Sri Lanka are being taught at training schools.

The Tigers' remarkable expertise with explosives was the first revelation-it was later calculated that 60 per cent of the casualties had been through mines and explosive boobytraps. The Tigers had mined approaches to Jaffna and the network showed tactical and technological ingenuity.

First of all, the mines mainly consisted of plastic explosive stuffed inside plastic jerrycans, sometimes even hollowed trunks of coconut-palms. As an IPKF veteran recalls: "There was not a shred of metal to buzz a metal detector." Yet there was so much explosive that it sent 15-tonne turrets of T-72 tanks flying away.

The LITE had perfected the tech-

nique of manually blasting the mines Often they would wait till half of the convoy had passed, or till the only armoured vehicle in a column reached



the mine. The mine was then determine nated by simply switching on the power by an LTTE operative waiting in nearby house. The mines were out nected with intricate networks of the tric wires to houses sometimes up to kilometre away, making it imposit for the IPKF to either track the Little or to defuse the mine before it exploit Similarly, horse-shoe-shaped and sonnel City sonnel Claymore mines were burder walls of houses along the probability.

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Atquite another level, the cult of the would never have come into ng but for the insensitivity and atrocof an utterly racist Colombo Govment. For more than a decade now, lankan forces have behaved like a .The harassment of the population ted this year with the Government's nsition of an economic blockade of peninsula. Petroleum products, bat-

even sanitary napkin-are not allowed in the region in the hope of breaking the Tamils' will. Supplies get in only through a network of bicycle-borne smugglers from the Sinhala mainland and boatmen from the Indian coast. Last week, petrol was selling at Rs 800 per litre in Jaffna. To humiliate the Tamils, the Sri Lankan Air Force has routinely rained barrels full of human excreta from Chinese-made Y-12 transport aircraft over Jaffna. No wonder there is no dearth of new recruits to the ranks of the LTTE perceived to be the only saviour of the Tamils.

SHYAM TEKWANI

"When we get angry with someone we may slap him. LTTE will simply kill him."

LALITH ATHULATHMUDALI Former Sri Lankan defence minister

But now, the LTTE faces a different challenge. Two decades of strife have forced nearly 40 per cent of all the Tamil population in the peninsula to leave. either for India, or Colombo, or the West. And the LTTE is running out of manpower. "It's desperate for the LTTE. It's like fish watching water run out of their pond," says a Colombo-based analyst. The Tigers are trying to thwart the outflow. Sometimes by force. Sometimes simply by putting a Rs 2,000 "foreign travel tax". But with little success.

Conventional wisdom would suggest that the Tigers would see the inevitability of a settlement and move towards it. But no, the LTTE is stricken with an internal dynamics against compromise. Each time there is such talk protests are raised: "Did so many thousands of our Tamils die in vain?" The LTTE is an organisation held hostage to death.

Also to its top leadership's belief that Eelam, ultimately, is just a matter of time. What else would explain Balasingham's grave answer to a recent question on why the Tigers were continuing to fight while it caused such hardships to fellow Tamils. He said:"We are not thinking about fellow Tamils now. We are thinking of the next generation."

> -SHEKHAR GUPTA in Colombo. with P. JAYRAM, KAVITHA SHETTY and ANAND VISHWANATHAN

of army movement. These too te blasted by an LTTE guerrilla sitgata safe distance. An officer of the the Regiment remembers seeing colleague, Major Anil Deepak Gardgetting his entire leg blown away allaymore. A senior officer recalls: tried our damnedest but there manswer to the mines. Finally we adecided to disconnect electricity in



from left) Sniper's chair; and more mines: ruthless killers

the peninsula. The casualties down immediately."

It it was impossible to keep the of forever and the Tigers played g game of wits with the IPKF. beserved that before crossing a the IPKF columns always sent quad to look beneath it for They began to mine the ap-

proaches to the underside of the culvert. Frequently they scratched out the milestones to confuse the IPKF columns not familiar with the region. A clever trick, it often lured the squad commander, or perhaps the only Tamil speaker in the patrol, to walk up to the milestone for closer look only to find a mine blow in his face. This would leave the patrol without its officer or interpreter.

Officers remember how shrewd the LTTE snipers had been in picking out officers from among the IPKF columns, an art apparently taught to them by none other than Indian Army trainers in the days of the India-LITE honeymoon. Now, officers recall, it was time for them to take precautions: not wearing rank badges, sporting slouch hats, carrying heavy back-packs. Yet when the Tigers could not spot the officer they picked out the radio-man always prominent because of the antenna. LTTE strapped sniper chairs under the crowns of tall coconut palm trees and a single sniper sitting on it could hold up a whole column for days, firing oneodd shot every once in a while to kill a soldier while the rest searched in vain for him or, in sheer anger, blasted the daylights out of a nearby village. "We fought the Nagas and the Mizos and the Sikhs in the Golden Temple. But none matched the Tigers in their viciousness, guile and daring," says an infantry veteran. No officer involved in the first round of fighting can forget the tragedy of Major A.A. Verghese, the only Tamil speaker in an infantry regiment who walked into a house full of panicky women to comfort them. An old woman pulled out a pistol and shot him. From then on, the Indian Army learnt never to take women lightly in north-eastern Sri Lanka.

# MERIDIEN NEW DELHI

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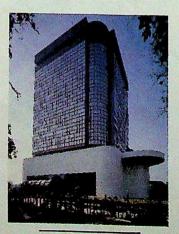
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# **Fast Moves**

## Strategy fails to come off

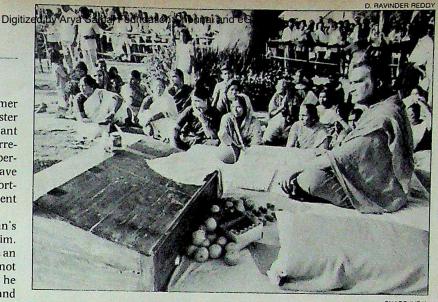
T'Sbeen show time again for former Andhra Pradesh chief minister N.T. Rama Rao. Given his penchant for theatrics, last fortnight the irrepressible showman was trying desperately to neutralise any sympathy wave infavour of the Congress(I) by resorting to an attention-grabbing silent fast in Hyderabad.

But the saffron-robed politician's gimmick may just boomerang on him. Hiscalculations that the fast will be an effective vote-grabbing tactic may not be so accurate, after all. Initially he drew a large number of women and children to the fasting site-many of whom had come with boxes of kumkum io get a darshan of the former chief minister. Even the grandiose site of the fast was carefully selected: it was near one of the 33 statues he had installed as part of a Rs 2 crore scheme to beautify the city when he was the chief minister. He sat under the blistering summer sun with a pitcher of water by him. The only privileged ones allowed to taste the water were V.P. Singh and Janata Dal President S.R. Bommai.

However, when Rama Rao continued fasting even after the Government conceded his demand for a judicial inquiry by a Supreme Court judge into the post-assassination violence in the state, any sympathy he may have won was quickly lost. Among the other demands made by the Telugu Desam supremo were payment of full compensation for all the damage and bringing all the culprits, including Congress(I) MLAs who had a hand in the violence, to book.

Chief Minister N. Janardhan Reddy decided to act quickly when the fast seemed to be turning into a dangerous political stunt—with diabetic Rama Rao's blood sugar level falling alarmingly low. Reddy ordered a pre-dawn Moopon the third night of Rama Rao's last, forcibly admitting him into the htensive care unit of the Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences after booking him for "attempting to comhit suicide". Although the entire polee Operation to remove Rama Rao has marked by high-handedness, tellow Dy High-Hard for a few lelugu Desam activists who took out a ent procession in Hyderabad.

When an obstinate Rama Rao con-



NTR fasting (top); being arrested: high drama

tinued fasting for two more days, doctors were forced to feed him intravenous fluids on the orders of a magistrate. Remarked Rama Rao: "If the Government says I was trying to commit suicide it would mean that when Gandhi sat on satyagraha several times he too was trying to commit suicide."

And within days he was back on the campaign trail. Playing the role of the wronged man to the hilt, he went around unshaven and in crumpled attire for his election meetings. Where he constantly harped on the fact that he was force fed. choosing to overstate his case by describing it as a "blow to democracy". But

if he thought he could stir up a fair amount of popular sympathy through such histrionics he was in for a disappointment. This time people were no longer interested in listening to an issue that didn't affect them.

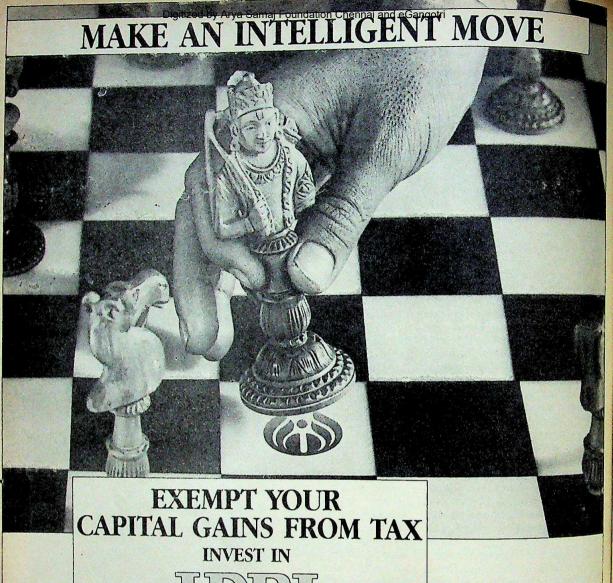
The popular view was that the real reason behind Rama Rao's fast against political hooliganism was to demand compensation for the damage to his family members' property in the postassassination violence. Apparently, the major targets of the looting that paralysed the city after Rajiv's assassination were the properties of people belonging to Rama Rao's Kamma



caste and his party MLAs. Besides. his own family's cinema halls in Hyderabad were also burnt down by an angry mobeven as two MLAs P. Sudhir Kumar and M. Mukesh were present on the spot.

Predictably, Rama Rao denied it. asserting that he had a more noble cause. And his party members were confident of the stunt paying off. Said Telugu Desam MP Renuka Choudhary: "Wait and watch. The women will be on our side." But Rama Rao clearly needs more than gimmicks to get back into the state's saddle.

-AMARNATH K. MENON



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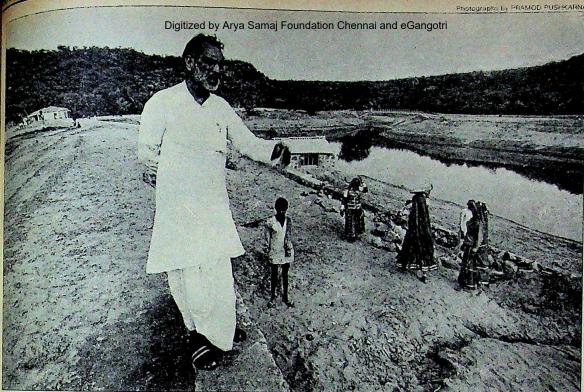
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BHARAT YATRA TRUST

## Dubious Development

Chandra Shekhar expands his real estate empire

ARETAKER Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar is taking his caretaking duties pretty seriosly, particularly as far as expanding he real estate empire of his Bharat latra Trust is concerned. The trust, a haritable body set up by Chandra Mekhar in 1983, runs 13 centres deto the promotion of rural develpment through education and better health. But its pursuit of more land for nore centres has brought it into a tadlong collision with the Union nvironment and Forest Ministry.

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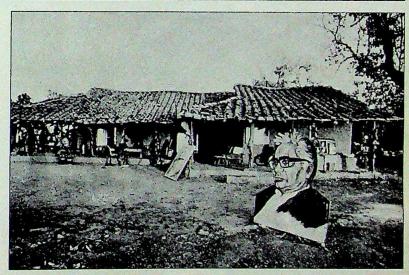
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The land for the 13 existing centres has donated by the respective state overnments. The one in Bhondsi, taryana, for example, is set in 70 acres Sprawling real estate. Looking more teafarmhouse with its lake and pedal bais, the Bhondsi centre's only comto the trust's objectives apears to be a solitary dispensary. The his is now trying to acquire 56.6 ctares (136 acres) of land in the lage of Karondi, near Jabalpur in



Madhya Pradesh. It applied for the land in May 1990, months before Chandra Shekhar suddenly became prime minister.

Upon receiving the proposal, the Madhya Pradesh Government found that the land was classified as Bade Jhar ka Jungle (Forest of large trees). Thus prior approval from the Central Ministry of Environment and Forests was needed before the land could be allotted for non-forest use.

The ministry carried out an inspection on August 31, 1990 and found that a portion of the site had already been occupied by a representative of the trust, a cottage had been built, and

Chandra Shekhar at Bhondsi (top); and Karondi Ashram: prime property

a school for local children was up and running. Further, the cottage had telephone and electricity connections, not to mention an overhead tank. These were all violations of the Forest Conservation Act 1980 since permission was not given for the construction of any building on the land.

None of these facts deterred Chandra Shekhar from continuing to lobby the Madhya Pradesh Government for the land to be handed over to the trust. In letters to officers in the Ministry of Environment and Forests,

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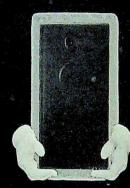
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he states that the land in question has GUJARAT thorities were unable to cope with the only 408 large trees-afar cry from the ministry's own estimate of over 8,000 trees. He went on to assure the ministry that the trust would plant "thousands of trees" on the land.

In spite of his persuasive promises, the ministry finally decided that Bade Thar ka Jungle comes within the meaning of forests under the Forest Conservation Act 1980 and as such it cannot be considered for any nonforest use, especially when the land is to be given to a non-government organisation. It suggested instead that the trust could, if it wished, carry out afforestation on the land without asking for a title to it. The trust's response has been cool.

the meantime. however. Chandra Shekhar became prime minister. P.S. Prasad, secretary of the trust, insists that Shekhar never exerted pressure on the ministry when he assumed office but his abiding interest in the matter was clear from a letter that Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Sunderlal Patwa wrote to him in February this year referring to the 'discussions' on the matter and saying that the land would be allotted to the trust the moment he had clearance from the Centre.

Officials in the Ministry of Environment and Forests also say the pressure continued. Though Minister of State Maneka Gandhi tried to defend the ministry's view, she knew it was a lost cause. Fortunately for her, the Chandra Shekhar Government fell before the conflict could come to a head.

But the trust has not given up its efforts. Prasad told INDIA TODAY that negotiations with the Patwa Ministry are on and may include a commitment on compensatory afforestation from the trust. Apparently, the trust intends to give back to the Government double the area of afforested land it will need for construction purposes. The catch is that the area needed for construction of buildings will be a tiny fraction of the 56.6 hectares that the trust is demanding and in all probability will get.

Meanwhile, INDIA TODAY has learnt that moves are afoot within the Madhya Pradesh bureaucracy to bypass the need for approval from the Centre. The state Government might take the view, as it has already hinted at in its communications, that Bade Jhar ka lungle is not forest land at all and that it is within the competence of the state Government to allot it to anybody.

ect

-ALOK TIWARI

## Killer Stroke

#### Heat wave claims many lives



THE weather god seems to have put the curse on all of northern India-particularly Gujarat. With the mercury rising to unprecedented levels

last fortnight, the state was swept by a killer heat wave of the kind scarcely witnessed in the past few decades. And Ahmedabad was the hottest of allwhere the temperature shot up to a sizzling 46.6 degrees centigrade and

situation. Admitted Praful Barot, the mayor of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation: "We were caught offguard for a while. But we recovered soon." Although the fire brigade's 19odd ambulance vans were constantly on the run, even that wasn't enough. The hospital services were also woefully inadequate. Several patients suffering from heat strokes were seen in the corridors of the sprawling corporation-run V.S. Hospital.

The rush was on for the city's eightodd crematoriums where bodies had to be lined up for hours. Many crematoriums-controlled by the municipal corporation-were faced with a shortage of wood to burn the dead. People with insufficient wood and no space to burn

JAVED RAJA

hovered at around 45 degrees centigrade for a week.

Although heat waves in parts of Gujarat are "not unusual for this time of the year" according to Dr S.M. Kulshreshta, director-general of the Indian Meteorological Department, one reason for the unusual temperatures this year is the absence of any thunderstorms. As the mercury soared, the number of deaths also shot up. The average number of daily deaths in Ahmedabad shot up from 75 to over 125. Between June 2 and 6 itself as many as 670 people died in the city.

Said Ishwarbhai Patel, a trader who lost his uncle to the heat wave: "It wasn't a heat wave but a heat storm. For a week it was like being in a furnace." The clutches of the heat wave didn't even spare two-year-old Lilavati Shah.

Worse, the city's municipal au-

Victims at V.S. Hospital, Ahmedabad

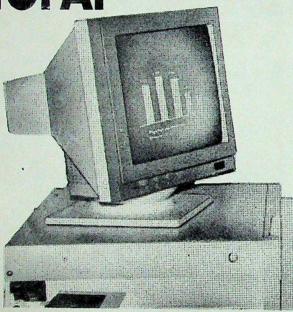
their dead, were forced to perform the funeral outside the crematoriums using assorted twigs borrowed from fruit vendors. At the Saptarshi crematorium in Jamalpur funerals were performed near a garbage dump.

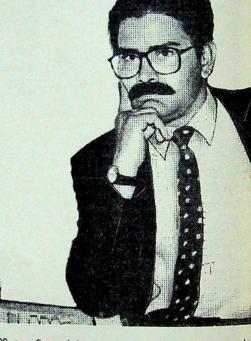
In one electric crematorium the lone furnace went out of order as it was functioning almost round-the-clock for three days together. Said Rasikbhai Patel, the person in-charge of the Ellisbridge Electric Crematorium: "In my 10 years of service I have never seen such a rush of bodies except when the Indian Airlines plane crashed at Ahmedabad in 1989.

The heat wave began receding from June 8. Now the people of Ahmedabad are waiting desperately for the monsoon which is around the corner. -UDAY MAHURKAR

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## **Violent Ways**

#### Congress(I) activists run riot



THE distant thunder from Sriperumbudur had its echoes in tiny Tripura. By the time the state limped back to normalcy after Rajiv Gandhi's assas-

sination, the death toll in related violence was 13 with over a 100 people injured. Arson had destroyed 400 shops and property worth lakhs was looted. Hundreds of poll booths were demolished. The victims: mostly families of Marxist supporters.

Even for a state inured to political violence, the double dose of tragedy was hard to take. The blame was laid squarely on the Congress(I). "There was no element of spontaneity in the violence," says CPI(M) politburo member Nripen Chakrabarty. "It was planned for the day before the polls and Rajiv's death came in handy." Elections to Tripura's two Lok Sabha seats were earlier scheduled for May 23.

The local violence set off its own tremors. The CPI(M), BJP and two independent candidates-Bhupen Dutta Bhaumik, a local editor, and Akhil Debath, an овс leader—pleaded with the Election Commission to postpone the polls. Or else they would be forced to boycott them. Chief Minister Sudhir Majumdar was unimpressed.

There was a method in the may-Cements, hem let loose on May 22. Before sunr & Platt, rise, CPI(M) and BJP party offices in through Agartala and subdivisional headquarspecially ters were under attack. As the day nanagers grew, so did the ambit of assault. toolscon Marxist workers were sought out for attacks. If they escaped, their property came in for the treatment-shops, veek-end rubber gardens, pumpsets, Sonamura, learning on the Bangladesh border, bore the brunt. About 200 Congress(I) workers, spearheaded by Narayan Das and Khokan Paul, both defeated in the 1988 assembly polls, scoured seven villages, burning at least 100 houses belonging to CPI(M) supporters, including that of Biren Dutta, founder of the party in the state.

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The Marxist resistance was sporadic. In Neamati, in south Tripura, 50 Congress(I) workers led by Ashis Saha, brother of state minister Jahar Saha, had just started setting houses ablaze When the villagers led by CPI(M) work-





Market gutted (top); and a child running for cover: terror tactics

ers fought back. Saha and another worker were hacked to death while three others were seriously injured. In most cases, it was either colleagues or Congress(I) workers who saved the skins of Marxist leaders on the hit list, a fact admitted by Chakrabarty.

Like their counterparts in the Opposition, Congress(I) leaders Asok Bhattacharya and Maharani Bibhu Devi hold former Union minister of state for home Santosh Mohan Dev responsible for the 'criminalisation'. The maharani. who is the party candidate from east Tripura. says Dev has "legitimised the position of criminals in our party. All kinds of ruffians have become ministers and bigwigs with his backing.

Dev, who is determined to repeat his 1989 victory from West Tripura, is unabashed. "I'm not a defeatist. The Marxists are. They've given up before

the battle has begun. I didn't cry when I fought their violence. I effectively countered it in 1988." he says.

State Chief Secretary Shyam Sharma feels the violence was unavoidable. "We did what we could have in any case." he says, pointing to the paucity of paramilitary forces. "We asked for 106 paramilitary companies .... The Centre gave us only 36." But CPI(M) leaders believe Sharma is part of Dev's grand plan to rig the polls.

Senior police officials say they lacked a clear directive to tackle the trouble. "We were told to hold our fingers on the trigger till the mourning period was over. We could not arrest hoodlums we knew were involved," says an officer. The result: only half a dozen arrests in a bloody week.

Yet the Congress(1) is not sitting pretty. Its image has taken a beating and it may take more than 'condolence meetings' to milk the post Rajiv sympathy wave. - SARBARI MAJUMDAR

11 NE 16, 1991 . INDIA TODAY 59

MADHYA PRADESH

## **King Con**

#### Natwarlal is unrepentant



HE is the king of con. For more than five decades now his name has been synonymous with the con-and-run game which he has developed into a fine

art. He has been as elusive as the Scarlet Pimpernel and as slippery and magical as Houdini. He is wanted in connection with over a 100 criminal cases in eight states. Various courts

have sentenced him to a total of an incredible 113 years. He has the reputation of nonchalantly walking out of prison. He last jumped bail in Varanasi about three years ago.

But age has finally caught up with Mithilesh Kumar Shrivastava, 77. better known as Natwarlal. Nabbed by the Bhopal police last fortnight, the legendary master-criminal presented a pathetic picture in the lock-up: he can walk only with the help of a stick, his face is wrinkled with age, a few

teeth are missing. "I know I have very little time left," he says.

He has made evil use of whatever time he had. Like last fortnight in Bhopal when he walked into a watch shop, introduced himself as an officer, of the Madhya Pradesh Vidhan Sabha and ordered 55 wrist watches worth Rs 28,000 "for distribution to employees". As usual, he offered to pay through a bank draft.

However, the draft was so shabbily forged that one look at it and the shopkeeper refused to accept it. "The printing was so bad," said Natwarlal with a mischievous smile, "I myself was wondering whether anyone would accept it." Soon the police intercepted the autorickshaw Natwarlal was travelling in. His identity was established on the basis of his photographs published in INDIA TODAY (November 30, 1987). Commented Bhopal's sp Pannalal: "He has gone senile. Even a roadside trickster would not use the same trick twice."

His eyes light up when he talks of his escapades. The elder of the two sons

Digitized by ofigatishman rodausinen Chein Branda e Gangor village in Bihar—his wife died three

village in Bihar—his wife died three years ago—has indeed come a long way since 1937, when he was first noticed by the Calcutta police for stealing nine tonnes of iron. Says he: "I enjoyed my life, stayed in luxury and earned loads of money." He claims that he is a pauper now having given all his ill-gotten wealth to the needy.

Initially. Natwarlal specialised in forging railway documents. He acquired his notoriety in the '50s and the '60s by conning bankers, jewellers and traders. His ability to forge documents and signatures paved the way for his success. He even claims to have trained police officers in crime detection. He boasts that a few years ago he extorted



Natwarlal: popular con man

Rs 3 lakh from Amitabh Bachchan for withdrawing a defamation case against the Hindi movie *Mr Natwarlal* which had "distorted my life".

Natwarlal has escaped from various prisons eight times till now. In one of his most daring jailbreaks from Lucknow in 1957, he put on a subinspector's uniform and walked out with the prison guards saluting him. His last escape was from Bombay in 1980. Boasts the con man: "No jail can keep me for long. I am not a criminal but an artiste and I live by my brain."

A few years ago, one of the judges hearing his case asked him: "How do you do it?" Instead of replying Natwarlal asked the judge for a rupee. The judge took out a currency note from his pocket and handed it over to the master cheat. Natwarlal pocketed the money quietly and told the baffled judge: "This is how I do it."

If his past is any indication he will, health permitting, go on doing it.

-N.K. SINGE

## Trial Trauma

#### Boy freed after 12 years



IT should have been the silver lining to his cloud of woes. But for Karam Pal Rautia, 24, the transition from a world of darkness to coveted freedom was

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anything but euphoric. On his release from jail last fortnight, the young tribal from Gumla district sat forlorn in front of the straw-and-tin hut of Uday Narain Choudhury, Bihar minister for jails, in Patna, waiting for someone to escort him to his village 400 km away.

His sense of bewilderment was overwhelming, yet understandable. Convicted for life when he was barely 12 years old, Rautia has spent half his life in the dismal confines of a series of Bihar jails. This, despite the fact that the Juvenile Justice Act prohibits life imprisonment and incarceration of minors in jails, recommending remand homes instead. Having virtually grown up in the company of hardened criminals, he now knows no other world. "I don't know how to reach my village, Basai Tola, in Chanpur block," he says, struggling to find his feet in an



Rautia: delayed justice

60

INDIA TODAY . JUNE 30, 1991

# EE MA W KA KHAZANA

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After the stupendous success of 'Lata In Her Own Voice' video cassette. HMV now brings you the audio cassette. The four audio cassette pack is a lyrical journey into the life of the Nightingale of India. Featuring songs from 'Mahal to Lekin'. Besides reminiscences with Jaya Bachchan, Yash Chopra, Gulzar, Dilip Kumar and many others. Lata speaks about herself for the very first time. This is definitely a collector's item for Lata fans. The Video is also available at selected HMV outlets.

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Evergreen Moods & Memories Suraiya: HMV revives memories of yesteryear melody queen Suraiya, by compiling 29 golden hits like 'Tere Nainon Ne', 'Rahi Matwale', 'O Door Janewale', 'Door Papiha Bole', to name a few, in a two cassette pack.



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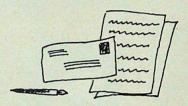


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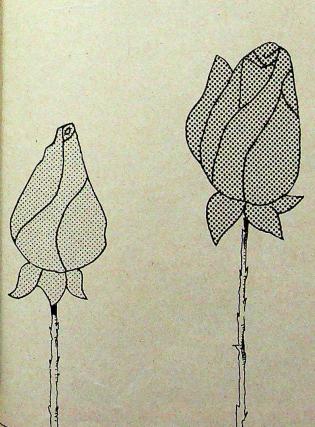
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alien environment.

What remains etched in his psyche is the scene of the "crime": an uncle—whose name he does not even remember—entered his home with a hatchet in hand. Rautia was the first target and, in utter panic, he hit back. "The weapon felldown. I grabbedit and hit my uncle. I don't remember how many times I hit him, but he was found dead."

This is the story Rautia repeated in court. But it failed to impress. And he couldn't hire senior lawyers to prove it was self-defence. His father sold off everything—the land, the

Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Changa and eGangotriarration and jail history consists psyche save his child and he died a dejected vinced him of his innocence. Says

man a year later.

The death came as a severe blow to young Rautia. Then, in 1983, he was shifted from Ranchi to Muzaffarpur jail. The move shattered his flagging morale, especially as his mother could not visit him that far. The hard-working adolescent plunged himself into studies and passed the Class X examination from the jail itself.

Last month the tide seemed to turn for him. Choudhury met Rautia and

vinced him of his innocence. Says Choudhury: "I have powers to remit two months of a convict, depending on his conduct." Having served 13 years, Rautia had only a month to go, so Choudhury got him released. But Rautia was stunned. He'd become a part of the jail and didn't want to go. So the minister took him to his own hut and arranged for his return home.

While Rautia struggles to piece his life together afresh, for him, justice delayed has clearly meant justice denied. —FARZAND AHMED

WITH the economy having reached its Commanding Lows, the Finance Ministry is busy tying itself up in naughts. Officials used

to passing the buck are now having to carry the can. Thus, in a surprise development, the subcommittee for Crisis Management has actually submitted some proposals to the Committee for Crisis Management. Here's how their meeting went.

Ist Bureaucrat: Some of these proposals are jolly good. The suggestion about selling confiscated gold seems to have gone down well with the editorial writers. And the ones about the credit crunch are even better....

2nd Bureaucrat: Don't you know the first IAS commandment? Never give credit where it is due. The job of a subcommittee is to take the rap if the recommendations don't work and allow us to take the credit if it does.

3rd Bureaucrat: Well, we were the ones who wined and dined the editors so the credit is rightfully ours. In any case, the main purpose of this meeting is to tailor the proposals so it looks like we thought of it all on our own.

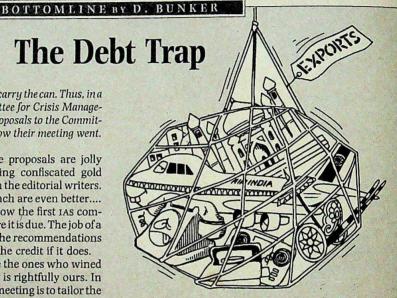
4th Bureaucrat: What are the other items we can steal..., I mean sell?

2nd Bureaucrat: I checked with customs. They have godowns full of VCRs and Two-in-ones, hardly the sort of stuff we can dump on the international market.

5th Bureaucrat: We have a suggestion from Chandra Swamy who says he can get us a good price for the Taj Mahal. Donald Trump wants to buy the real thing.

3rd Bureaucrat: He's as broke as we are. What else? 4th Bureaucrat: We have another proposal from





Rajan Jetley. He says they are interested in buying Air India and renaming it Air Britannia.

2nd Bureaucrat: We can't sell off our national symbols even if they are a national disgrace.

3rd Bureaucrat: We will have a surfeit of raths after this election. We can sell them to status conscious westerners. Rolls and Mercedes are passe. Not everybody has air-conditioned chariots with all that art-deco on it. Devi Lal's rath even has a lift.

4th Bureaucrat: How about DDA flats? There's a great demand abroad for collapsible housing and they don't come more collapsible than DDA's.

3rd Bureaucrat: The suggestion on selling electrical goods to western manufacturers sounds good. If we can convince them that their customers will have to replace their irons, toasters, mixies and electric stoves every few weeks, they can triple their sales.

Ist Bureaucrat: All these seem like good ideas. But won't the finance minister want to take all the credit?

2nd Bureaucrat: Haven't you read the Grey Book? It lists the options to prevent such an eventuality. We can leak it to the press before the minister gets to see them.

3rd Bureaucrat: Or we can stall the proposals till the minister is changed. We then offer it to the new minister so he can fall into our trap.

Ist Bureaucrat: What trap?

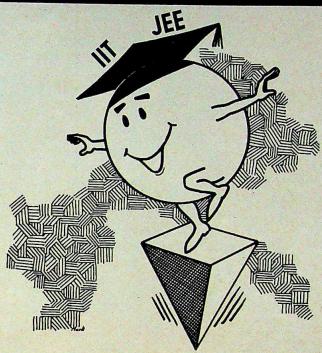
Bureaucrats. (in chorus). The debt trap.

# SOMETIMES THE MOST DIFFICULT SUBJECTS REST ON A SINGLE POINT

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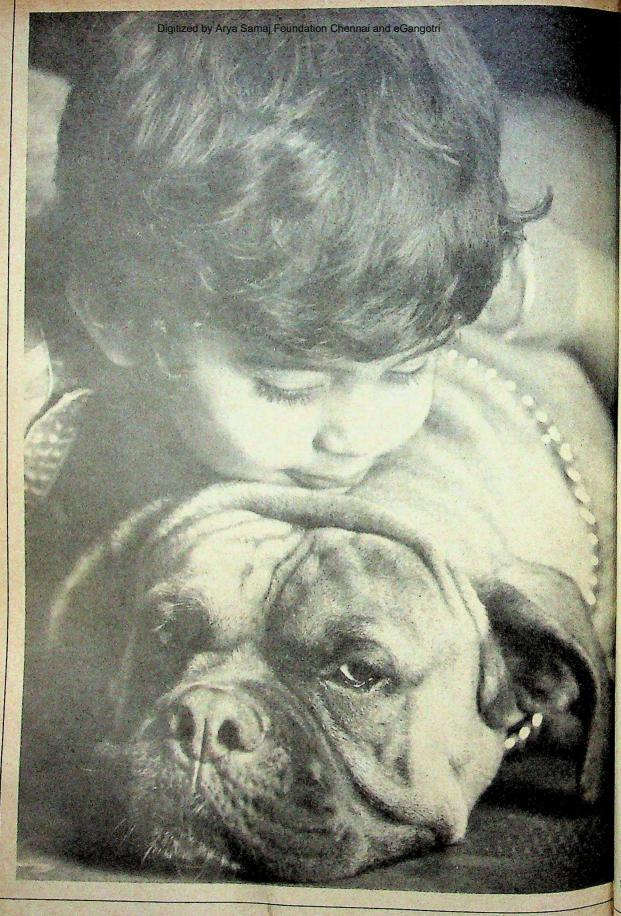
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#### SIGN POSTS

DIED: Dinesh Goswami, 56, in a road accident in Assam. Goswami, leader of



newly-formed the Natun Asom Gana Parishad, was also the Union minister for law and justice in V.P. Singh's cabinet. In the early '80s, he took an active part in the

Assam agitation and was one of the founding members of the AGP.

RECORDED: The century's highest temperature of 56 degrees celsius, in Briyawali. The tiny village, a few kilometres away from the Pakistan border is situated in Rajasthan's Bikaner district. The temperature was recorded by the army unit at the border.

APPOINTED: Air Marshal N.C. Suri, as chief of the Indian Air Force. Suri who is currently the vice air chief is to take over on July 31. A graduate of the First Course of Joint Services Wing, the air marshal has held many senior operational and staff appointments.

SENTENCED: Auto Shankar, alias Gowri Shankar, to death, by Chengaianna district and sessions judge. The notorious criminal was the principal accused in the sensational Tiruvanmiyur multiple murder case in Tamil Nadu. Two accomplices got death sentences and five others life terms. Shankar who was an autorickshaw driver, is being tried for other murders, and was recently caught in Orissa after he had escaped from prison in Madras.

DIED: Uma Shankar Dikshit, 91. Dikshit was cabinet minister in 1973-

74. In 1984, he turned down a governorship to join the Congress(I) Working Committee. He had managed Jawaharlal Nehru's election campaign in Phoolpur in 1957 and

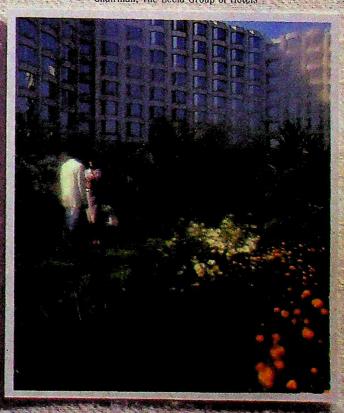


1962; and Indira Gandhi's campaign in Rae Bareli in 1967 and 1979.

OFFERED: By the Tatas and Birlas, to support the project led by the Indian Mountaineering Institute for cleaning the polluted Gangotri basin, in the Himalayas. The mountaineering team that returns with the most garbage will get an award from Sir Edmund Hillary.

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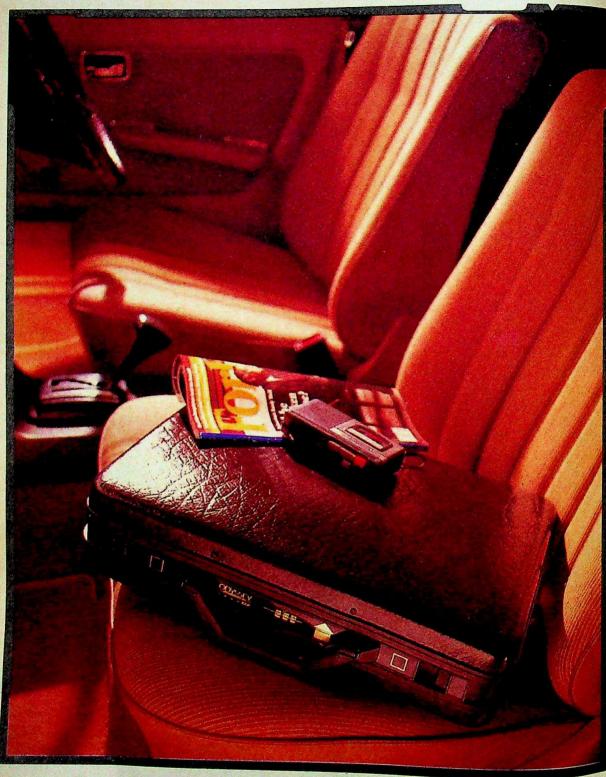


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Sometimes it can be a long thirty hour run.

sometimes twelve, or just eight. Whatever the duration, there's a term for it in travelling parlance. It's called the Overnight trip. And it calls for a special kind of bag. Not too bulky, not too brief. But something basic, and yet, definitely stylish. Now V.I.P. has just the overnighter for you. Odyssey — world class ABS luggage. Sheer elegance to look at, the Odyssey has a leather-like finish. And its sleek black powder-coated frame ends up in two exclusives — a combination lock and a soft grip handle. Lining the inside is not satin but suave suede. A matching separator doubles up as a folio for work papers. And a thoughtful extra are the high grade elastic fasteners which don't sag but clasp tight to keep things in place. Now tell us, how would you describe the Odyssey. Another suitcase... or travelling accessory?





17.00 0

SECOND MARRIAGES
Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangatri

# New Beg

Increasingly second marriages are becoming acceptable as people realise that a broken marriage does not spell the end.

#### By SHAHNAZ ANKLESARIA AIYAR

OU see more of them than ever before. He, grey-haired, often balding; she, thirtyish. Both starry-eyed, that 'just married' look sitting uncomfortably on already sloping shoulders. Their conversation also sounds a bit odd-she gushes on and on about the baby not yet five, he proudly announces the achievements of the 21-year-old daughter. Both shift embarrassingly at compliments about her "looking

too young" to be the mother of "such a grown up girl". At which point the explanations rapidly follow-the daughter is his, the baby hers, this is their second marriage.

As men, and increasingly women, from the upper middle class and beyond are ending unhappy marriages and entering new ones, the traditional Indian hum do hamare do couple is now moving into a 'his, hers and ours' combination. And the trend is allencompassing. From high visibility professions like journalism, advertising and public relations to prim and pinstriped bankers and even the studiously cultivated "old world" business families, the self-appointed flag bearers of traditional Indian values. In the process, old stereotypes and prejudices are being challenged as these couples begin their life's second journey through unexplored terrain, without any of the familiar signposts to caution them of the pitfalls ahead.

Earlier, it was never very difficult for a rich widower or a divorced man with children to marry the conventional 'cute young thing', frequently just a bit older than his daughter or the 'issueless widow without any encumbrances'. But today, single professional women and widows in their mid-30s, are marrying men at the peak of their careers and wives are taking their children out of one marriage and into another. Moreover, second marriages are taking place not just between couples who were married earlier. Even single men and women are marrying people who bring with them the 'baggage' of an unhappy or unfortunate past.

The reasons behind the trend are obvious. India is changing-very slowly, very gradually. Divorce is now an

acceptable option, even within that bastion of respectabilitythe middle class. High court lawyers today claim that more divorce petitions are being filed by women than men as marriage has ceased to be an 'until death does her part' contract between families anxious to unburden 'marriageable daughters'. The breakdown of the joint family-which had kept domestic problems like marital incompatibility or infidelity under tight wraps—and the emergence of nuclear units ouldn't means that men and particularly women have more personal

space to make choices which the joint family would earlier have struggled to prevent er fathe have struggled to prevent.

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The Indian woman's growing sense of self-worth ypocrite means that when a single nd into a woman gets married, it is be- ough de cause she herself chooses to uccess st do so, regardless of whether bandon her choice meets anyone's art of the approval or not. Or, if already cceptano married, her ability to financially support herself and her parried w family leads her to make eater, a choices which a decade ago would be unthinkable.

Nontheless, caught in the vortex of change, prejudices remain strong enough to push many educated and otherwise independent single women, into marriage with divorced men with children and to take on all these additional burdens because marriage is the only way for them to gain acceptance in a social milieu which still looks upon the single woman with suspicion and disdain. Divorced or widowed women with children agree to marry again

because they hope a husband will provide their children with the kind of stability that aging parents cannot. "When I came back to my parents' home after ending my marriage. I found was being pushed back into the role of a helpless girl that my parents thought I was before I married," says 40-year-old Sheila. "They became over-protective, asking me who I went out with. I was fast losing my personal dignity. The situation became unbearable. Yet I stayed there because I could not afford my own home or the colossal expense of my children's education." Today Sheila has married a man much older than herself, is forced to leave her children with her parents because her husband prefers her to visit them there rather than have them "clutter" his home. But, she adds, her husband is fully



Second marriages often succeed as the past has taught both partners patience and more understanding.

ommitted to supporting her children financially a sandap Fo hem when they visit and has given her a home of sorts thich she so desperately needed.

#### BUT THERE'S A HIGH PRICE TO BE PAID...

Even while single women are challenging old stereotypes, hey find they have to pay for daring to be different. When at 8, Leila, a single woman journalist decided to marry Suresh, a olleague-"we shared the same values, he talked my inguage"—her parents, Tamil Brahmins, were delighted. Ithough Suresh came from a different community, he had a good job and seemed a steady sort of man who could make heir 'very independent' daughter happy. What her father did 10t know was that Suresh was divorced with two children. hat more foday, six years later, he remains in the dark. "If he knew I was parried to a divorced man he'd just die," says Leila flatly. her part'

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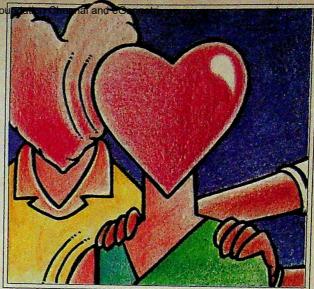
Both mother and daughter live in mortal fear of the father tumbling on the truth. In fact, when Leila confided her narriage plans to her mother, she "had a huge fit". Why ouldn't Leila marry someone "more acceptable"? Why was er vibrant young daughter, who could marry anyone she hose, keen on a man who had "already lived his life"? Today, he anguish of making such a choice, keeping the truth from er father and the constant lies, are evident in Leila's voice.

"Indians, particularly rich educated Indians, are elf-worth spocrites," says Rina, 40, who walked out of one marriage a single and into another with a single man. "A woman always has a l, it is be- ough deal in a marriage, first or second." For every one looses to access story there are two of women who have to either whether bandon children of an earlier marriage or spend the larger anyone's art of their second marriage fighting for their children's falready cceptance in the new household.

Rina's former husband, a wealthy businessman (they and her parried when they were both in their early 20s), was a wife o make eater, a man with a vicious temper. She lived with his



Second marriages can be traumatic for the child, but then caring adults provide children with a better home than warring ones.



Many parents still disapprove of second marriages, even in cases where their own children have had a broken marriage.

violence for seven years, until one day she just picked up her daughter and left. A few years later, she met Vinod, a 40-yearold bachelor, and decided to marry him. But his mother, who had spent all these years mourning the fact that her wellheeled son hadn't "settled down", refused to accept her in their house. When she did, she was adamant that Rina's 12year-old daughter could not live with them. Vinod quietly gave in to his mother, completely ignoring his earlier commitment. For Rina, this was a bitter blow. She now shuttles between her husband's home and her parents' home where her daughter lives, struggling desperately to cope with a second tragedy.

#### THE PROBLEM OF PARENTS...

While traditional joint families are splitting up, it is still quite acceptable for Indian parents to live with their sonsbefore and after they marry. When Kuntala, a university lecturer in West Bengal, agreed to marry Soumit, his parents baulked at the idea of their eligible young son marrying "a woman of easy virtue". Kuntala was divorced and had a 12year-old son. Soumit himself admits candidly: "Earlier I too had reservations about marrying a divorcee, but when I fell in love with Kuntala I realised such mental blocks were silly." But not his parents, who thought their son was throwing himself away on a woman "whose marriage had failed probably because it was her fault". They only relented when they realised that "I was hell-bent on going through with it," says a contented Soumit.

Surprisingly, such prejudices exist even among parents whose own children are divorced. Sudha, whose husband died within months of their marriage and whose son was born soon after the tragedy, found her second husband's parents fighting hard to prevent their son-himself divorced and a father-from marrying her. "You know it all-a widow is inauspicious," says Sudha bitterly. "I had an

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children cannot understand why they are being used in the property parents who they love equally why their

#### HIS AND HER CHILDREN ...

Even when she marries for the first time, a woman in a second marriage finds she really has no locus standi vis-a-vis her husband's children. Leila, despite all her praises for her "easy going" colleague-husband, admits that she really does not have the final say about issues concerning his children. Frequently, a spouse in a second marriage will put off having children because it may hurt the existing ones, sometimes without the partner's consent. Priya, whose former husband Ashok walked out of their marriage and into another, finds herself feeling sorry for his second wife. Still guilt-ridden at having broken his first marriage, Ashok appears obsessed with their daughter who he visits every

evening in Priya's home. "They kept putting off having another child because Ashok did not want to hurt his daughter," says Priya. "Now it's too late. So he's asking her if she 'minds' their adopting a child!" Their 10-year-old daughter has become the "other woman" in Ashok's life, says Priya. She acknowledges that she herself was furious at the thought of her daughter calling Ashok's wife her stepmother: "I said nothing doing, a stepmother exists only when the mother is dead. I now see I was quite wrong. But my ego just couldn't cope with this." Today, Priya marvels at how Ashok's second wife, a educationist who spends hours helping her stepdaughter with her studies, copes with all this hostility.

Many second marriages come to breaking point over the issue of children from the earlier marriage. Confused and hurt at the breakup of their parents' marriage, children often resent being asked

to "love" the newcomer in their parent's life. Moreover, as Dr Mohan Ram, head of the Department of Psychiatry at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, says: "Stereotypes of step-parents dominate children's minds. They see vices in a step-parent that may not exist. Their own parent may scold them a hundred times before giving them more pocketmoney and they don't mind. But if a step-parent says 'no' firmly, the child immediately resents it."

Children are used to a given pattern of interaction between themselves and adults and take time to adjust to new patterns. A step-parent can build tremendous resistance in a child if he or shetries to bring quick changes in the child's life. Most psychiatrists believe that it is harder for a child whose mother is marrying for a second time to adjust because links between the mother and child are stronger.

But equally, a child in a difficult marriage who is used as an ally by one of two parents may have to go through much

children cannot understand why they are being used in such a manner by parents who they love equally, why their loyalties are sought to be constantly divided. This may adversely affect their future development and their own parental role can become defective.

But again, there are husbands like Vir, who recognise that a woman who is not the natural mother of his child can love it as much as he does. "In fact, more wisely," he says. "I cannot thank my wife enough for the ways in which she challenges me to be a better father. The best of parents use children half-wittingly to settle scores." He feels that second marriages, like adoption, break stereotypes about parenting. "We still believe that only a natural parent can care for the child. So many people continue in unhappy marriages for the sake of the children. This is nonsense. While the parents' divorce can be

equally heart-breaking for a child, there is every reason to believe that caring adults can give children a better home than warring ones."

But men like Vir are exceptions. The general consensus among marriage counsellors is that it helps when there are grandparents to care for the children while the new couple takes time to establish their relationship. Grandparents are more mellow, they have a better capacity to look objectively at situations, and unlike the estranged spouse, have a vested interest in making the second marriage work. And, children are more willing to obey their grandparents. Furthermore, grandparents usually act as a stabilising link between the past and the current situation.

Unfortunately, there are very few marriage counselling centres run by professional counsellors in India. Usually, such centres have a social worker or a person with a master's degree in psy-

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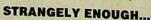
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chology functioning as a counsellor which professional psychiatrists feel is inadequate.



Second marriages usually succeed, despite all the odds. For a start, not even a liberated Indian can still deal with a second 'failure'—which is how a divorce is still perceived. Unlike a first marriage, those in a second marriage are usually mature adults, who marry each other despite the obvious hurdles. Past experiences have taught them patience, wisdom and a degree of flexibility in dealing with other people. As Vir says: "In a second marriage, you don't share only bubbling joy and love, you also share pain—from the very start. When two people come through this passage of fire, they cannot be easily prised apart."

Names have been changed to protect the identity of the persons.

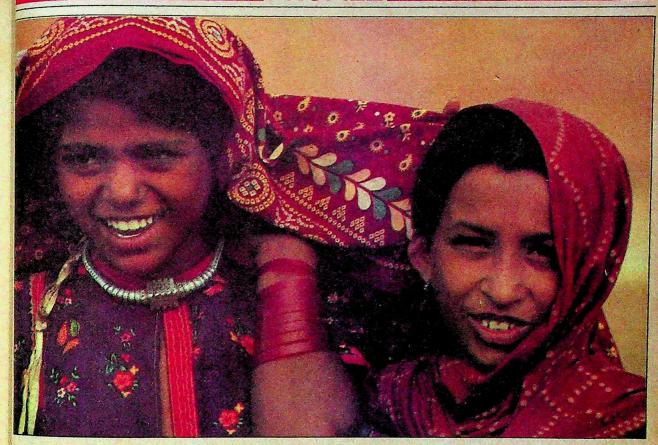


Indian women today are making independent choices and are willing to marry even men with children, regardless of approval.

76 INDIA TODAY • JUNE 30, 1991

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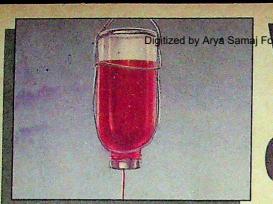
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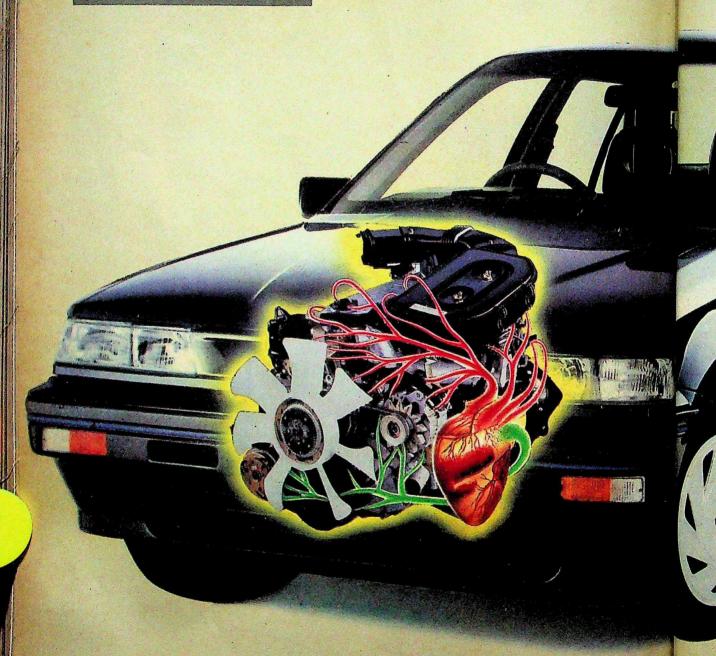
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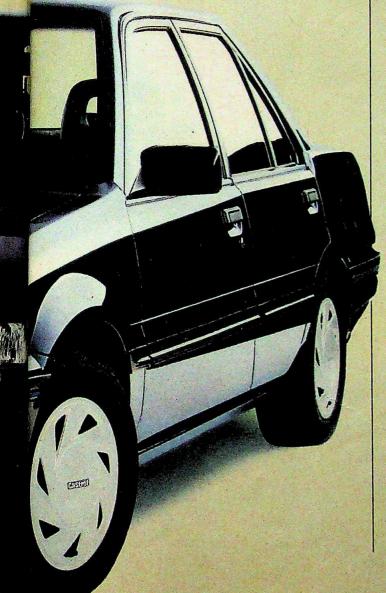


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# Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri Indian whiz-kids have Logging on to India's Potential

moved up the hi-tech ladder in California and are now playing catalyst to Indo-US joint computer ventures back home.

DEEPTI KHAROD AHMAD in California

HE place is Silicon Valley, California. Most of the cars on the road on a nippy Saturday last December were probably headed to the malls for Christmas shopping. But a stream of dedicated drivers in their Hondas and Toyotas were headed to a Hewlett-Packard (HP) office in Santa Clara, leaving behind the last rays of the day's sunshine for a carpeted, windowless auditorium. And once inside, over 200 engineers and entrepreneurs, most in suits, others acknowledging the weekend in their Levi's, enthusiastically sat through a two-hour session about setting up joint commercial ventures between American and Indian companies. Majority of the listeners were Indian, but there were some who were not, who had also come to learn how the US Agency



PRABHU GOEL, President, Systems Division, Cadence Design

# "India must make a strong push in one area—software development. You do not win a war by fighting battles on 20 fronts at the same time."

for International Development would play venture capitalist to back their partnerships in India.

Just a few years ago, an average American Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in Silicon Valley—Mecca to the world computer industry-might have envisioned elephants and snake charmers at the mention of India. Now, many of the Valley's vendors see dollar signs when they eye the country's expanding consumerist class. And helping them focus their sights better are Valley Indians.

In the mid-'70s, only a handful of Indian engineers were present when an entire region—from the southern tip of San Francisco Bay and south-east towards the soft brown hills-was named after silicon, the main ingredient of a thumbnail-sized chip that rules a multibillion dollar world trade in computers. telecommunications, entertainment electronic gadgets and what-have-you. Today, over 5,000 Indian engineers work in the Silicon Valley. And they are moving up the hi-tech ladder.

Take Prakash Chandra, at 32, a marketing engineer at MIPS, which makes the upper-end chips called RISC. Earlier at Intel-which invented the microchip—Chandra was part of a team that designed "key design automation tools", later used for Intel's high-selling 80386 microprocessors (i.e. chips). An alumnus of 11T, Kharagpur, Chandra moved to MIPS because, he claims, its RISC system is better than Intel's.

Sanjay Bajaj, 27, another 11T, Kharagpur, Valley Indian, heads a hushhush research group at NeXT, a computer company promoted by Steve Jobs of Apple Computer fame. And Somshankar Das spent 10 years as an IAs officer in India before going to Stanford for an MBA. Now 40. heis manager for strategic programmes at visi Technology, a leader in chip technology.

Clearly, the Silicon Indian has arrived. But now, having put in years with the Valley's best-known companies-International Business Machines, HP. Sun Microsystems, and National Semiconductor—they are playing catalyst to Indo-US joint ventures back home.

True, US hi-tech firms have snatched up Indian-educated engineers, but their CEOs have, till recently, been wary about doing business in India, imagining problems of Third World backwardness and a quagmire of protectionist bureaucracy. If some have been willing to take the plunge, it's largely due to lobbying by Valley Indians. Observes Radha Basu, manager (International Contracts) at HP: "A lot of companies that have been successful in setting up shop in India have a champion within the company in the US. For India, they tend to be Indians." Consider the announcement of HP's Rs 46-crore investment in HCL Hewlett Packard—the biggest by a US firm in India. While HP may have come in anyway, some groundwork on India's potential was laid by the Silicon Valley Indian Professionals Association (SIPA), a ginger group of engineers that has been networking to build bridges between US and Indian hi-

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# "Electronics in the "90s is a global business. I am in favour of more international companies setting up shop in India."

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Others too have been nudging US hich firms India-wards. A sample:

Prabhu Goel, 42, an electrical engier from 11T, Kanpur, set up Gateway sign Automation in Massachusetts. he company was worth \$90 to \$100 illion when it merged with Cadence MINAZ AHMED esign Systems in 1989. As president of ge of Cadence's three divisions, Goel is otting expansion at the company's rrently 100 per cent export-oriented bsidiary at Noida, near Delhi. Its busiessincludes computer-aided engineerg and design.

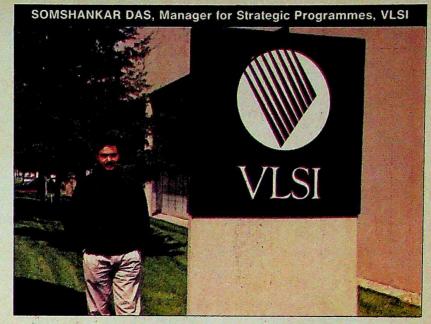
Sanjay Bajaj of NeXT, who has an Sfrom the California Institute of Techology, played a large behind-theenes role in helping a billion dollar mpany to set up an R&D partnership r software development in Bombay.

Somshankar Das of VLSI Technoly pushed for a collaboration with dian Telephone Industries for the anufacture of silicon chips in India. he Indian Government is dithering ver the proposal, which could save it round Rs 60 crore in foreign exchange nually by substituting for imports.

There are others too, like Rajiv grawal, 26, who was hired by worksta-You on maker Sun Microsystems in 1989. s a member of SIPA's software focus toup, Agrawal maintains the group's

source files on software evelopments and comanies in India. His role to facilitate Indo-US pllaborations.

For an annual \$15 fee, embership to SIPA is kward-pen to anyone. But, ctionist Igineers comprise allost 90 per cent of the 00 names on the mailing t. SIPA's Raju Reddy, l, says Bangalore's eleconic culture is a breedg ground for Valley enneers. The other bulk applier are the IITs. eddy's business card— English and Japanese, though he doesn't speak panese—bears the Intel 80. A programme maner at Software Marketg, he managed to con-



vince Intel to develop software ties with an Indian company.

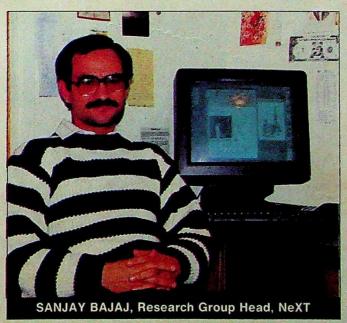
E is reluctant to disclose specifics about the one-year-old collaboration, but says "there's increased awareness in Intel about the benefits India offers for software development. Given the successful relationship, the project is likely to grow.'

Speaking of growth, the Valley's Sun Microsystems has Bangalore's Wipro marketing two of its workstation systems in India to the tune of \$8 to \$10 million a year, according to Rajiv Agrawal. In Delhi, Pertech Computers is marketing Sun's 386i workstations. Sun now plans to open an office in Bombay.

"India is an attractive option for American industry for many reasons,"

> says Chandra. And adds managers who are working in China or Taiwan should jump at all that India offers: skilled labour, engineers fluent in English, lower production costs than those in the US, regulations that favour export, and a growing domestic market.

Critics charge that brokers of these manufacturing deals, which exploit India's cheap labour, net a tidy profit by contracting American jobs to engineers in India. Meanwhile, Indian technical know-how doesn't increase, they say. But SIPA members stress they are not promoting such "body-shopping" or tech-



There is plenty of scope for improvement in telecommunications in India. This is one area where the general Indian public could benefit from hi-tech."

technology development".

Presumably, the Valley's Indians could lend a helping hand. Being firstgeneration migrants, their emotional links to India are strong. The total Indian community in this area numbers around 50,000. And most of them socialise with Indian friends and relatives, not Americans. Adding to the desi flavour are even more Indian restaurants, sari stores, and an entire support sector of insurance salesmen, travel agents, lawyers, and doctors catering to Indian needs.

Another characteristic of the engineer's life in the Valley is its fast pace. Company hopping is common, and sudden unemployment is a constant threat due to rapid changes in technology which demand new specialisations and



# "Indian engineering firms are not doing well here because they don't have marketing savvy. They don't know how to market their products and resources."

a supersensitivity to developments in markets like Japan's. Recently, National Semiconductor, one of the largest employers in Santa Clara county, laid off nearly 2,000 engineers. Within weeks it picked up half as many employees,

rehiring some and choosing others with different specialisations.

With the pressure of losing one's job at the drop of a hat, or more accurately at the dip of a profit curve, people in this industry are prone to stress-related illness, including nervous breakdowns.

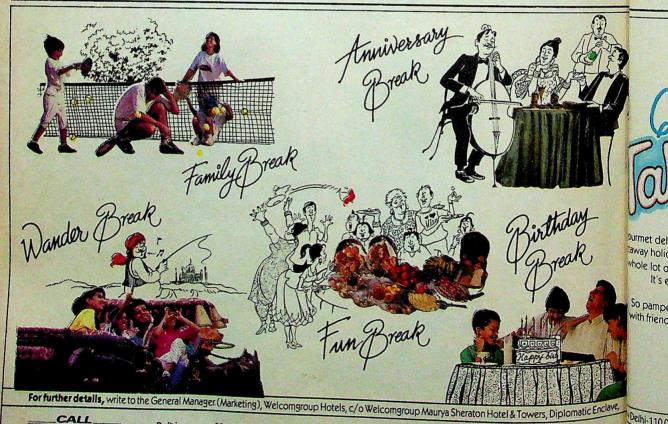
But, Indian educated engineers say that professional challenge is an incentive to stay on. "Of course, there are economic reasons. But even if we prefer to return to India, challenging jobs are te engine

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# "Bangalore's electronic culture is the breeding ground for Silicon Valley ingineers. The Indian Institutes of Technology are the other bulk suppliers."

says Dinesh andra Verma, a Presient's gold medalist from Kanpur. A 1989 IIT ladras study cited ambion as one major cause at pushed 74 per cent of final-year students to ply for post-graduate ogrammes abroad.

The Indian presence the Valley is strong, inking second only to e Chinese among forgn-born engineers. Praash Chandra says when e began his career in 984 at Advanced Micro evices, a billion dollar miconductor manufacirer, 25 per cent of the am that developed Intel's 80386

icroprocessor was Indian.

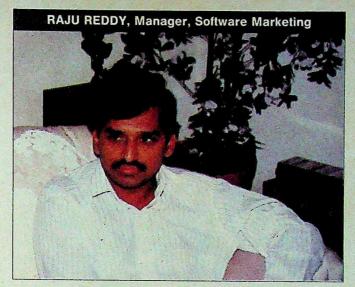
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Will India's hi-tech wizards reincen- im home? Tough question. The Taiere are lanese Government caught Silicon e prefer alley off-guard when it lured expatriobs are te engineers home with high salaries



and the chance to become topdogs in their largest firms. Some of the estimated 500 Taiwanese who returned left highlevel management positions in the Valley. But a Stanford graduate employed at Fairchild went on record recently to say that despite 10 years of experience,

many of his Asian friends "still cannot promoted" to high-level management positions.

Other minorities, including Indians, also complain about the "glass ceiling". But, as India tries to absorb the lakhs of unemployed Indians returning from West Asia, bringing back its engineers from abroad is hardly a priority. In fact, many view the immigrants as a brain bank, rather than a brain drain.

Anyway, for someone like Raju Reddy, who recently had a daughter and bought a three-bedroom

house in a Silicon Valley suburb, giving up the cosy comfort of the pastel couch in front of his fireplace would be a little hard just now. Meanwhile, Reddy and other Valley Indians like him, are doing what they can to ensure a hi-tech future for their homeland.

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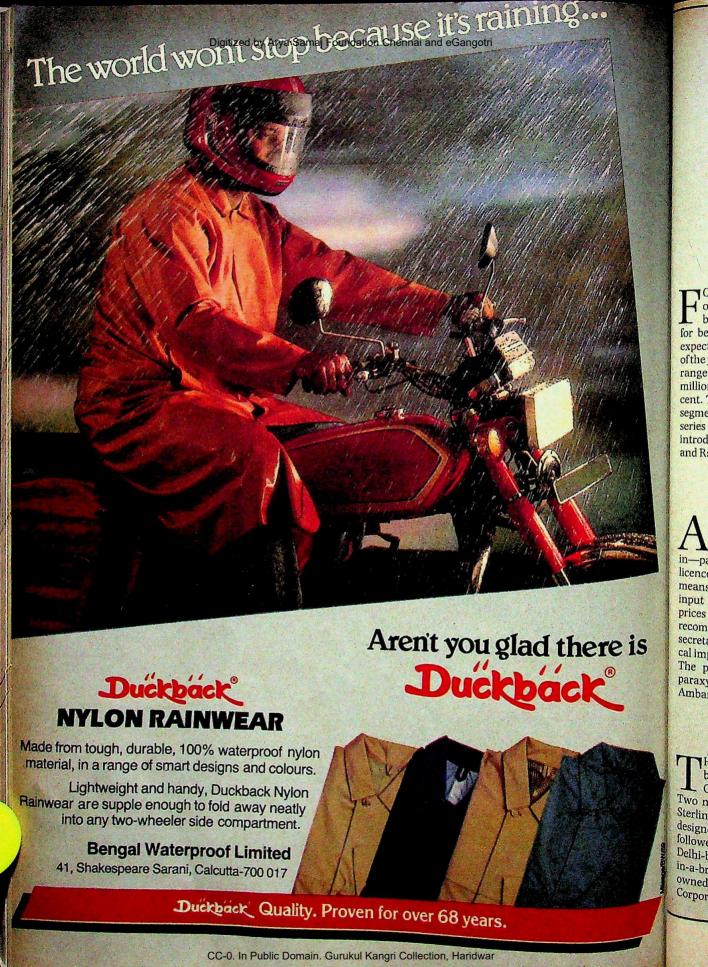
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### Digitized by Siya Selsan Inches and eGangotri

HE gunshots heard in Dalla, Uttar Pradesh, where workers are opposing privatisation of a public sector cement unit, seem to have had no impact on the Centre's disinvestment plans. No matter who forms the next government, bureaucrats are certain that some public sector equity will be off-loaded to bring in money. Thus the office of the Controller of Capital Issues in the Finance Ministry is devising methods of valuing public sector equity, especially for determining the premium at which they can be sold over face value. One aspect being looked at is whether the assets of some public sector corporations need revaluation. The Standing Committee on Public Enterprises (SCOPE) has identified 25 major companies where the Government could disinvest its stake. Whereas the finance minister has suggested that 20 per cent of the equity of public sector companies be off-loaded to mutual funds which are subsidiaries of nationalised banks, scope has argued that between 30 and 60 per cent of the equity capital could be sold to the public, with banks and financial institutions as intermediaries.

### TIME TO EXPAND

OLLOWING its well-publicised tie-up with Timex Inc of the US last fortnight, the Rs 100-crore Bangalorebased Titan Watches has drawn up ambitious plans for beefing up its distribution and retailing network. It expects to treble its 31 outlets across the country by the end of the year. The total Indian market for watches in the price range of Rs 250-350 is currently estimated at around 12 million, of which the public sector HMT's share is over 45 per cent. Titan hopes to sell some 2.5 million watches in this segment in the next year or so, over and above its Aqura series in the Rs 300-400 price range. It is also planning to introduce more expensive models priced between Rs 800 and Rs 900, including watches that can be worn by divers.

### PETROCHEM GAMES

few months back, the headlines talked of a small victory for Nusli Wadia, chairman of Bombay Dyeing, when a petrochemical input he was interested in-paraxylene-was transferred to the open general licence (OGL) list of easily importable items. Effectively this means that arch-rival Dhirubhai Ambani, who makes this input for captive consumption, can't dictate paraxylene prices for Wadia. But Ambani has lost little for the main recommendation made by a nine-member committee of secretaries which went into the whole issue of petrochemical import tariffs, including paraxylene, has been shelved. The problem: it is difficult to decide a fair level for paraxylene import duties without knowing what it costs Ambani to produce it.

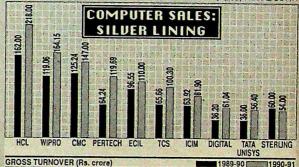
### LAPTOP MOVES

HERs 50-lakh market for laptop computers is in for a boost. The market is catered to by bit-players PAR Computers, Hope Computers and Zion Computers. Two new products are expected to be unveiled shortly. Sterling Computers of Madras is ready to serve up a laptop designed in-house. The price: around Rs 20,000. It will be followed up with a notebook-sized refor Rs 30,000. And the Delhi-based Hope Computers has launched a lower-end 'rcin-a-briefcase' at Rs 16,000 called Compact Pc. The stateowned Electronics Trade and Technology Development Corporation is also planning an entry into laptops.

### HARD DESCENT

ECENTLY released figures by the Manufacturers Association of Information Technology, the association of computer hardware manufacturers, indicate that the Rs 2,000-crore industry's growth rate has slowed down from 66 per cent in 1988-89 to 24 per cent in the last





financial year-1990-91. But the detailed data also shows that after a disastrous third quarter (October-December). the industry raked in the moolah in the last quarter which accounted for 45 per cent of the year's sales.

Though HCL retains its premier position (see chart). its turnover growth of 34.5 per cent was partly the result of a change in the practice of calculating sales on the basis of despatches instead of orders booked, Of the top 10 computer companies, the fastest growth in sales was recorded by Pertech (86 per cent), followed by Digital Equipment (India) Ltd (69 per cent). The laggards included ESPL, Zenith and ORG while the turnover of Sterling, Hinditron, Essen, OMC and IDM actually fell.

### INTERNATIONAL LOG ON

unique government-industry collaboration is on the cards. The Ministry of Industry has asked the Confederation of Engineering Industry (CEI) to set up a technology information centre which will assist Indian companies to get access to international databases on many topics. The Rs 3-crore project will be set up by a separate society to be floated by CEI, in which the European. Economic Community will also become a partner. The data to be provided by the centre will include information on technology transfer.

Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri

# The Big Squeeze

THE Keynesian maxim—we are all dead in the long-term, so let's look at the shortterm—obviously doesn't work well for India's corporate sector.

The RBI's credit and import policies, designed to make both bank finance and foreign exchange for imports more difficult to come by, are having the desired effect. Industry imports have reduced to a trickle, and are helping shore up foreign exchange reserves. And raising the minimum lending rate for working capital, placing a ceiling on the incremental credit-deposit ratio for credit

is drawing excess cash out of the system. It's fiscal an 25 1 discipline of the sort prescribed by the IMF to fix is of pa India's economic ills.

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Ideally, these measures make companies oney, is tighten their belts, compelling them to make better use of domestic resources. But they are also argin re halting expansion plans, increasing production rts and costs and leading to drastic production cutbacks. in shar

The Government always targets the corporate Jenka. c sector, never its own expenditure and waste. If the lash loc new government doesn't address these issues, it ands, and could well stall India's industry.

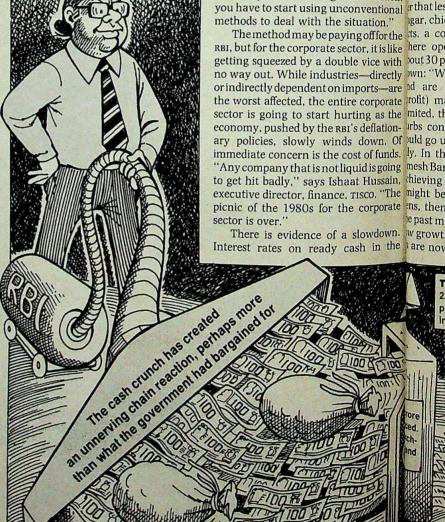
# **CREDIT POLICY**

No money, no future?

HERE is a sense of panic in corporate offices countrywide. Because the one commodity that keeps them humming is now being slowly but surely sucked out of the system: cash. In a concerted move over the past three months, the RBI has pursued a policy of drawing excess liquidity out of the economy, pulling in cash created in large measure by the 1989-90 fiscal deficit of Rs 11,750 crore. Besides, this is money that is not being mopped up by domestic production, staying around, fuelling inflation and chaos. Very simply, the RBI has made it harder for borrowers to pick up money by allowing banks to fix limits for withdrawals, and charge interest rates which are not fixed any longer. In effect, borrowing money is more expensive than ever before, as a large number of people are chasing less money at higher rates of interest.

The RBI followed through with another punch. By raising cash margins on imports-to a staggering 200 per cent in some cases, up from 50 per cent of the value of wares to be imported-and limiting and imposing an interest rate surcharge for banks from advancing cash to meet margin requirements, the RBI hit foreign exchange demand. The RBI has also virtually frozen financial institutions' foreign exchange holdings parked with it. According to banking circles, this aggressive approach has already yielded some results. There has been at least a Rs 2,000 crore-reduction of cash from the system, and an equal amount in forex demand. Says an RBI

economist: "When the burden on the monetary instrument gets too much, gher cos



oney markets have fluctudwildly in the 25 to 80 per at per annum band. Bills of change, which till a few onths ago were being disunted at 15 per cent, are w going at nothing less s fiscal an 25 per cent. And the F to fix ys of paying 14 and 15 per nt interest for longer term panies oney, is at best a memory. make ow it is available for nothgless than 16 per cent. Add re also argin requirements for imluction rts and the problem shows tbacks. in sharp relief. Says Harsh porate penka, chairman, Ceat Ltd: e. If the lash locked up in margin sues, it oney only adds to the cost of nds, and impairs liquidity. hich in turn means higher st of borrowing for the ort-term.

tion."

on the All this translates to much, gher costs of production and the danentional rthat less goods will be sold. Says Veer agar, chief executive, DCM Data Prodoffforthe its, a computer hardware company it is like here operating costs have risen by ice with bout 30 per cent since the credit clampdirectly wn: "We have cut down production, rts-are ad are only selling top-end, high orporate rofit) margin products." At Escorts g as the mited, there is a very real fear that if eflation- arbs continue beyond August, costs own. Of juld go up by about Rs 5 crore annuof funds. ly. In that case, says Vice-President is going mesh Bannerji, the company's plans of Jussain, thieving a 20-per cent growth rate co. "The night become difficult". If this haporporate ens, then high growth companies of e past may become mired further in a wdown. w growth syndrome, since credit limin the are now determined on the basis of

Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotrihigher than the prevailing

### THE INTENT

- By making cash more expensive to get, reduce industry demand, take money out of the system, and deflate the economy.
- By making import credit expensive, reduce the run for imports, develop domestic resources, and save foreign exchange.

### THE EFFECT

- With the credit squeeze industry expansion plans are on hold, operating costs increase. Production costs increase, production is cut back. Stocks dwindle. Consumers pay more.
- With import curbs, specific industries are hit capital goods, plastics and petrochemicals, consumer electronics, drugs and pharmaceuticals, light commercial vehicles. The list is likely to grow.

performance. Industries that are likely to be affected most include electronics, consumer durables and capital goods. For these, a likely scenario for the next few months is simple, stark and very chilling: no imports, hence non-availability of raw material and semi-finished goods, higher cost of money at home and, therefore, less production. At worst, zero production.

While the corporate world is viewing the developments with alarm, the supply-siders aren't quite as worked up. On the contrary, banks which have gone ahead with fixing new credit limits and interest rates are being looked at as do-gooders. For example, when in mid-May, ANZ Grindlays Bank decided to charge borrowers a credit limit of Rs 2 lakh and interest rates 3 per cent

(inter-bank) money market rates, other bankers labelled it as a bold step. "We were not sure what reaction to expect," says S.D. Nayyar, general manager, institutional banking, ANZ Grindlays. "but it has to be done." A fortnight later, Standard Chartered Bank followed suit with certain modifications. The difference between the two is that ANZ's floating interest is pegged on the daily call money rate, while Standard Chartered's scheme will be determined on the basis of two weeks' average rate. Either way, the banks stand to gain money at a time when most companies are afraid of losing it. The defence is quick. "It is not an attempt to make

an unfair profit," says David Gardiner. executive director, corporate banking division, Standard Chartered, "but to cut costs.'

The logic is that a credit sqeeze will force companies to trim fat, become more efficient and borrow less, depending more on in-house doctoring than the manna of easy money. The RBI and the banks are fairly certain that the measures will help prevent a fiscal doomsday. But for the moment, the corporate world feels they will only hasten it.

-SHIV TANEJA

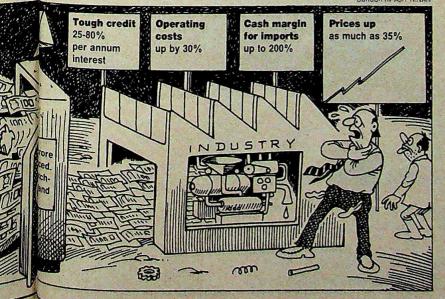
# IMPORT CURBS

# Margin mania

T was meant to shut the lid tight on imports, which it has done remark-Lably well. But it went wrong on other fronts. When the RBI first imposed its curbs on imports three months ago, the nodal bank didn't bargain for the kind of negative fall-out the policy would have on industry and the economy.

For industry, the policy was frightfully simple: if a company intends to import, then it has to pay up twice the value of the import as margin money before being able to open a letter of credit (LC). Otherwise, forget it, Which is precisely what many companies have done since the curbs were slapped on.

On the one hand, the policy makes sense. The balance of payments position is tough and the country has a little over Rs 2,000 crore worth of foreign exchange. India is so desperate for hard currency that the Government sold off



and policy pundits say more could follow. In this scenario, the curbs are logical. On the other, the curbs have created cash problems for units that use even a miniscule amount of imported components in the manufacturing process. Increased margins have driven up costs, and with banks being told not to lend money to cover these margin expenses, the result is one of corporate pandemonium, with only the 100-per cent export-oriented units being spared the axe. "The next quarter is going to be difficult," admits D.R. Mehta, chief controller of imports and exports.

Difficult may be an under-

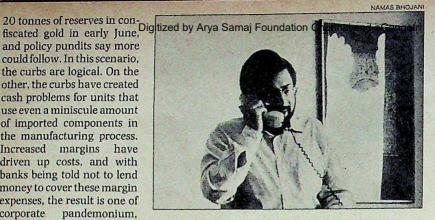
statement. In the Okhla industrial area near Delhi, nearly 1,000 workers have been laid off, and production levels in units-many of them export-oriented-have dropped by 20 to 22 per cent. "Their exports," says Sunder T. Vachani, chairman (electronics), All India Manufacturers Association. and chairman, Weston Electronics, "will fall by 15 per cent. It could result in losses up to Rs 1,000 crore.'

Plastics and Petrochemicals: The axe has fallen hard on the plastics and petrochemicals industries which are highly import intensive. For instance, usually 55 to 66 per cent of the PVC requirements of the plastics industry

are met by imports. Vijay Merchant, president, All India Plastics Manufacturers Association, says production levels are down from 35,000 tonnes per month for highdensity polyethylene (HPDE) to between 7,000 and 8,000 tonnes per month. He says that large local players such as Indian Petrochemicals Ltd and Reliance Industries Ltd have also fallen behind on production, which means a supply crunch for units that had expanded their operations in anticipation of higher production.

The net impact of curbs for the consumer will be higher prices for plastic items such as milk pouches, oil sachets, buckets, and PVC pipes.

Consumer Electronics: The Rs 3,000-crore television



"Cash locked up in margin money adds to the cost of funds, which means higher cost of borrowing for the short-term."

HARSH GOENKA, Chairman, CEAT Ltd.

and consumer electronics industry. already buffeted by negative growth rates, has something more to moan about. Says A.N. Sehgal, president. Indian TV Manufacturers' Association and general manager, Jupiter Radios, makers of Texla brand Tvs: "After three months, we (Texla) will be left with no stocks.'

Picture tube manufacturers are making things more difficult by pushing up prices (roughly by Rs400 a piece) in another round of continual hikes. Their costs are rising, thanks to the 40-per cent import content in picture tubes.

Pharmaceuticals: The Rs 4,000-



"My company and many others are not being allowed to open LCs even after paying 200 per cent cash margins."

crore pharmaceutical industry also finds itself in a pickle. For one, the curbs are going to lead to shortages in imported raw materials that are used in the manufacture of life-savers such as anti-cancer and anti-TB drugs. For another, exports might fall sharply. The industry annually imports about Rs 460 crore worth of 'intermediates', or raw materials, and a good portion of it goes into drug exports, which were valued at Rs 856 crore last year. This figure is likely to drop, but it isn't clear by how much. Raphael D'Souza, secretary (economics and administration). Indian Drug Manufacturers Association, estimates that the industry might see a revenue shortfall

between Rs 300 crore and Rs 400 crore this year.

Says Bhai Mohan Singh, chairman and managing director, Ranbaxy Laboratories Ltd, which imports basic drugs to the tune of Rs 25 crore: "We are taking loans from private parties. Even that is becoming difficult." Small firms have more problems. "Domestic suppliers are making the best of import restrictions by jacking up prices of intermediates," alleges A.K. Jain, manager, Brawn Pharmaceuticals Ltd, a small Delhi-based group. The price of Ampicillin has shot up from Rs 1,500 a kg to Rs2,000 a kg, he says. The prescription for the common man is: get

ready for a dose of drug shortages and costly medicines.

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LCV Industry: Though the import content of the light commercial vehicles industry may have come down from 62 per cent in 1985 to 18 per cent today, even this level of import dependency will make the business "come to a grinding halt", says DCM Toyota's Managing Director Vivek Bharat Ram. There is trouble, he says, even if the industry pays out the margins the RBI requires. "My company and many others are not being allowed to open LCs even after paying 200 per cent cash margins." For now, import curbs have led to production cutbacks. But if the Government sticks to its guns, it could lead to closures. And chaos.—SRINIVAS VIJAY

VIVEK BHARAT RAM, managing director, DCM Toyota Ltd.

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# To a Lion, they will all live to see the future.

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But not all understand this.

That's why it has always taken a special kind of person to be a Lion.

Special men and women who share a common concern. A concern for the society in which they have succeeded.

Who realize that beyond the achievements of everyday life is that most elusive object: inner satisfaction.

And who have come together to touch the lives of others less fortunate than themselves.

Needless to say, people like these aren't many.

After all, if everyone in the world had the vision of a Lion, there wouldn't be an average person.

Millions of people make up this world.
But just a few shape it.



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If you wish to extend support to this national cause or require more details about Lions Clubs and its activities, please contact the nearest Lions Club in your town.

ored by: Kothari Products

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UTTAR PRADESH CEMENT CDIRIFORM Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotti

# **Privatisation Problems**

## Take-over sparks off a bloody labour protest

HEN Dalmia Industries Limited (DIL) took over state-run Uttar Pradesh Cement Corporation (UPCC) in May, it had bargained for profits, not trouble.

Last fortnight at least a dozen agitating workers were killed and over 50 injured when police fired on them at Dalla in Sonebhadra district where one of upcc's three cement factories—the others are at Churk and Chunar—is located. The workers were protesting against privatisation of the enterprise. "There was no need for all this bloodshed," says S.N. Pande, a worker who survived four bullet wounds. "All we were trying to do was mobilise public opinion against the take-over."

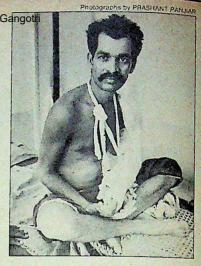
Workers fear that DIL will cut back the 6,000-strong UPCC labour force. But the new management has promised not to retrench labour. Says Sanjay Dalmia, chairman, DIL: "Once we convince labour that we'll not retrench them, the problem will end."

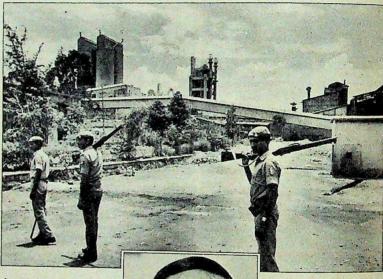
This throws up a key facet of the privatisation game: the risks involved. At a time when opinion is gradually building up among a section of politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen that India ought to take a serious look at selling off public sector undertakings in a bid to reduce government expenditure and inefficiency, a Dalla comes like a body-blow to the whole enterprise. But more than suggesting that privatisation efforts could lead to labour problems, events at Dalla suggest that a business-politics nexus battling vested interests within a public sector can perhaps be the greater danger.

By any privatisation standard, the sale made sense. upcc's plants have accumulated losses of Rs 155 crore, and expected to add Rs 30 crore a year to it. The fairly modern plants use only. 40 per cent of their 25.6-lakh-tonnesa-year installed capacity for cement and consume 200 kwh of electricity to produce a tonne of cement while the industry norm is just 90 kwh. Besides, it tied in with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav's policy announcement in March last year that any public sector enterprise in the state with losses over Rs 10 crore would be considered for privatisation.

And Dalmia had every reason to be

pleased. He had pulled off quite a deal, taking over the corporation and its three cement factories for a modest sum of Rs 26.12 crore. The corporation has assets worth around Rs 600 crore. There is more. Out of the negotiated sum, only Rs 1 crore has been paid after signing the memorandum of understanding, with Rs 4 crore to follow in six months and the rest in instalments spread over two years. Apart from this,





the Dalmias wrested numerous concessions: sales tax deferment for five years and rescheduling of liabilities worth Rs 25 crore where there would be a three-year moratorium for repayment. DIL has picked up 49

per cent of upcc equity, a little less than a majority holding, but with five of its directors on a board of nine, the Dalmias have total control over upcc.

Dalmia could not have hoped for a better deal. There is a boom in the cement industry and with little imagination, the corporation can be turned around. Says Pravin Kumar, the new managing director: "These plants are wonderful and it should be difficult to make a loss."

This rosy corporate forecast is soured by a two-way flow of criticism. One that is directed at the new man-

Injured worker (top); the factory; Dalmia (inset): tough times

agement and the chief minister by the labour unions and political parties. The second is directed at the previous management by

the Dalmias. The firing focused on the take-over, and Yadav, who is drawing considerable flak. For instance, BJP leader and former Varanasi MLA Shyamdev Rai Chaudhari echoes a prevalent sentiment, saying that it was now obvious that Yadav had a vested interest in the deal and so favoured DIL to other parties, ACC and J.K. Industries among them. As a prominent labour leader points out: "The Government and the Dalmias were desperate to pull it off as a new government might shelve plans to privatise or give away the three units at Dalla, Chunar and

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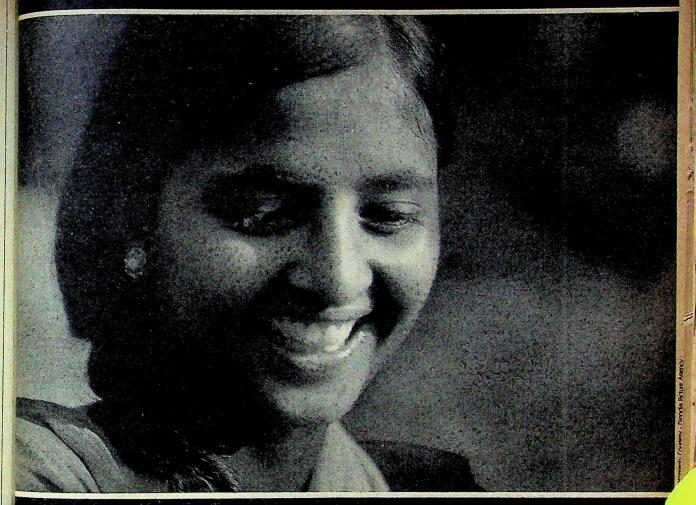
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widing free check-ups and medical relief underprivileged. And averaging 2 lakh a surgeries per year, in the past. In shas now launched a nation-wide mme, 'Sight-First—Lions Conquering ess', in July 1990.

ing a phenomenal target of 20 lakh per year, within the next 5 years.

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<sup>ed</sup> in the public interest through the courtesy of Kitply Industries Limited —



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fired to save their lives. He says 24 policemen were injured when brickbatting started near the factory where about 800 workers had gathered for a meeting. Says he: "We are not hunters but have the right to defend ourselves." Dwivedi says that all he did was to implement the orders he got from Lucknow to ensure that cash balances should stop being drawn, or be kept in the factory premises and that no material should go out from the factory, presumably a step towards the Dalmias taking charge. But, there is no sign that the workers tried to take anything away from the factory premises. Chandra Shekhar said in Parliament that the deal was finalised six months ago hinting that it cannot have anything to do with the elections. And that he also had information that the workers were out to destroy the factory. Interestingly, even the police who are trying to build a case against the agitators do not say this.

What has happened is that the killings have only intensified feelings against DIL. Says Sandip Dubey, a labour leader in Churk: "We are not against privatisation. But we are fighting against how it was done. Only a probe will reveal the scandal."

Kumar, the managing director. counters by saying that upcc was a losing proposition mainly because of irregularities--skimming off funds by officials, nepotism, corruption-galore. An example that is thrown up is that 16 lakh gunny bags for packing cement were missing from the inventory when the Dalmias took over. DIL executives allege that it is officers of the corporation who are actually spearheading the agitation as the take-over would slice off the malpractices that helped many grow rich. Points out Sonebhadra's District Magistrate, K.N. Singh: "Many managers have business interests in the cement industry and have grown rich by mismanaging the government unit.'

Whichever logic holds, the fact is there is no way that the take-over can be countermanded. The Dalmias have effectively taken control. The workers realise that they cannot do much now but are in no mood to give in. If anybody does the tightrope walking, it will be the new government both in Uttar Pradesh and at the Centre, where plans for privatisation may be one of the first items on the economic agenda.

-RAMESH MENON in Dalla

### Easing the debt situation

T wasn't exactly a sale of family jewels, but it made headline news last fortnight. All the Government did was sell off 20 tonnes of confiscated gold at international prices, and picked up \$215 million (approximately Rs 430 crore) in much-needed hard currency. This, say Finance Ministry officials, will go to pay for interest and short-term loan repayments for India's massive \$70 billion foreign debt. The move appears to be prudent.

Churk for a throwaway price."

The local Superintendent of Police, K.N.D. Dwivedi insists that the police

The local Superintendent of Police, but a Samaj Foundation Chemiai and eGangati, the gold lost would have served its purpose. Besides, the bank has 10 tonnes more of confiscated gold in change. Even if the SBI doesn't pay tonnes more of confiscated gold in stock. That still leaves 40 tonnes of confiscated gold, and though 18 tonnes have been earmarked for sale to the iewellery trade and another 7.5 tonnes for inclusion in the official reserves, in an emergency, a further 14.5 tonnes is available for sale.

Even if this isn't enough, the Government can actually draw upon a part of its official reserves, a provision in the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934. Says C. Rangarajan, RBI deputy governor: "The RBI is empowered by the Government to keep 15 per cent of its gold reserves outside the country for



Confiscated gold: large reserves

But political parties went to town it—despite Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha's assurance that confiscated gold, not the RBI's actual gold reserves of 332.5 tonnes, was solddemanding details and a probe. The decision to sell the gold was taken by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, headed by Sinha, after obtaining a verbal go-ahead from Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar.

The fact is, there is nothing to it. First, the gold is mortgaged, not sold outright. The State Bank of India (SBI), through which the gold was routed, has entered into a swap deal with Zurich-based Union Bank of Switzerland. Basically, it means sur has an option to buy back the gold in the future, while using its cashed value now, at an interest rate of 6.33 points over the London Inter Bank Offered Rate, making it cheaper than other means of raising quick foreign ex-

mortgaging purposes." A country's gold reserve position indicates its ability to convert it into liquid cash in an emergency. Besides, several countries, including the US, Australia and Italy, have pledged part of their reserves to overcome balance of payments crises.

There is yet another reserve to tap: seized gold at the pre-confiscation stage. Confiscation of seized gold takes place only after adjudication of the seizure is through. About 100 tonnes of seized gold is presently stored in the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) and Customs vaults. In 1990, 5.5 tonnes of gold was seized.

According to DRI officials, the threat of seizures and confiscation won't deter smugglers. As long as the domestic price of gold continues to fetch 40 per cent higher rate than international prices, smuggling will continue. The Government may prefer this easy route to reserves. At least it clears debts.

-ANIRUDHYA MITRA

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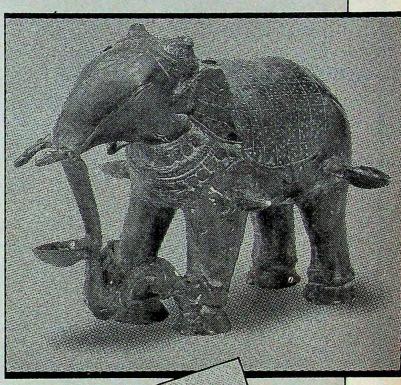
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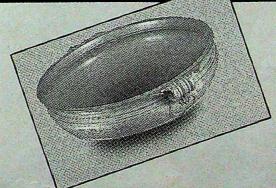
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### **Ringless Trading**

some-time-dab-■ For blers on the stock-markets. hope is on the horizon. Early last month, the Government issued guidelines to set up the first Over The



Ravimohan: new initiative

Counter Exchange of India (OTCEI), to be co-sponsored by the financial institutions. It's slated to become a ringless stock exchange

automated and aims at removing the problems associated with the country's main exchanges. Gone will be the payment delays or hassles with stock-brokers. Says R. Ravimohan, chief

> executive, otcei: "All transactions will be in cash. There will be no badla, or delays in payment."

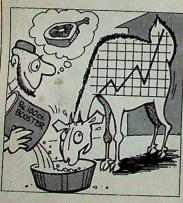
From the point of view of the companies being listed. there are several advantages. Adds "The Ravimohan: cost of bringing an issue to the market

will be very small; and delays in money collection will be minimised." The OTCEI will also bring small companies and small investors together in a big

### Beefing Up

■ India's livestock population should be marginally ahead of its human population by the turn of the century, reversing the situation of the '80s when the last livestock census was taken. In 1982, the livestock headcount yielded a number of 614 million, well short of the 1981 census figure of 683 million Indians. By the year 2001 livestock will have proliferated to a level of 1,077 million.

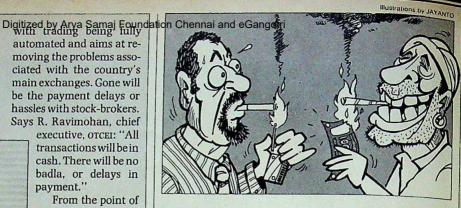
Currently every 20th member of the world livestock population is Indian.



but that doesn't mean that Indians are well off for meat. The country's output accounts for less than 1 percent of the global total. The reason: insufficient attention paid towards tapping the vast potential of the meat processing industry. Almost all the 3,600-odd slaughter houses in the country are poorly equipped and pay scant attention to hygiene.

These are some of the facts highlighted in a recent study prepared by the Vadodara-based Operations Research Group for the Min-

istry of Food Processing Industries. The study claims that meat production can go up from around 1.2 million tonnes at present to 1.8 million tonnes by the turn of the century with a minimal investment of just over Rs 100 crore. This will also enable daily per capita meat consumption to increase.



### **Smoke Signals**

■ Indians are smoking fewer cigarettes. Unfortunately this is no reason to start partying. Indians are simply smoking more beedis. Every month thousands of panwallas sell as many as 7,000 million cigarettes (see chart). That may add up to a lot of smoke, but the fact is cigarette sales are actually 12 per cent lower than in 1985, thanks to high excise duties and consequent higher prices.

The direct effect of high cigarette prices has been the

shift-over to less expensive beedis. With beedis being an unorganised sector product, sales figures are impossible to get. But R.A.Poddar, chief executive at Godfrey Phillips (India), estimates that beedis outsell cigarettes by as much as 12 times.

Faced with stagnant sales, cigarette companies are shifting focus from volume to value. They have upped prices by 10 per cent. Since the next budget is unlikely to spare cigarettes, the smoke signals point to another hike. Only the beedi industry will be rejoicing.

## **Merger Mood**

■ The bride and groom are bashful. When news broke a few weeks ago about the possibility of a merger between the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASSOCHAM) and the Confederation of Engineering Industry (CEI), the chairman of the former, Avijit Majumdar said: "We talk with many associations on areas of cooperation. It is routine." But insiders admit that ASSOCHAM had made an informal proposal to tie the knot. The merger makes sense due to cer's financial muscle-it has a budget of Rs 9 crore compared to a mere Rs 1.5 crore of assocham. And it has as many as 2590 members vis a vis ASSOCHAM's 500. What's more, about a quarter of the members in



Majumdar: much to gain

the two associations are common. And with a host of engineering companies diversifying into non-engineering areas, even CEI finds the need to broaden its base. The only glitches could be assocham's many trading company members, who are often at loggerheads with manufacturers. If CEI's ardour cools. it may well be because of the groom's family.

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# SHRIRAM INDUSTRIAL ENTERPRISES LTD.

SIEL, is one of the four companies that emerged from the division of DCM Ltd. Thus it is a 100 year OLD, NEW company, presently turning over Rs. 400 crores.

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- FOODS: Hydrogenated Vegetable Oils (Rath & Panghat) Refined Oils (Ruby), Sugar (Mawana)
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Shriram Honda Power Equipment Limited, turning over Rs.35 crores, is a technological and financial collaboration with HONDA MOTOR COMPANY of Japan and manufactures portable generator sets, general purpose engines and water pumps to Honda's quality standards.

Expansion plans are already being processed for entry into export oriented units, financial services, paper, sugar business management, different ranges of compressors, generators etc.

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TRAINING: 12 months of intensive industry training inclusive of formal classroom modules & hands-on training. PLACEMENT: On completion of training, the MTs will be placed in the Middle Management Cadre of the group in techno-commercial functions and will be given early responsibility and authority. They will be expected to display sufficient potential so as to man General Management positions within 7-10 years, by the age of 30-35 years. COMPENSATION: The initial package will be more than Rs 60,000 p.a.. On confirmation (in one year or before) the MTs will get about Rs 90,000 p.a..

Please send in a detailed resumé within 10 days to:

GENERAL MANAGER-PERSONNEL

# SHRIRAM INDUSTRIAL ENTERPRISES LIMITED

4TH FLOOR, KANCHENJUNGA, 18, BARAKHAMBA ROAD, NEW DELHI 110 001

In case you have any queries, please feel free to contact our Personnel Department at 3310171

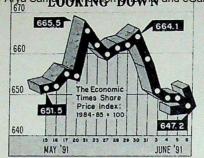
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# Scrips Slide

### Bleak mood with low trading

ITH most of the financial sector's attention. money, focused on short term funding and punitive restrictions imposed by the Reserve Bank of India. the mood on the stock-markets during the past fortnight (ended June 6) has been largely listless with poor trading in most of the scrips. The Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) 30-share Sensitive Index has slipped by roughly 12 points to close the fortnight at 1284.81. The Economic Times index of shares for Bombay also showed a fall and closed at 743.9.

Among the pivotals, Acc was down by Rs 15 to Rs 2,600, largely as a result of lack of support, and Standard Mills declined to Rs 88.50 from Rs 95 on account of profit taking, TELCO, Bajaj Auto and Hindalco are some of the other forward scrips which registered small to moderate losses. Business in the cash section has been pretty poor. Videocon International fell by Rs 15



SHARE PRICE INDEX

to Rs 200. In late kerb deals, however, some of pivotals flared up. Reliance Industries, which was at Rs 143 during the official trading session, moved up to Rs 147 on renewed speculative buying and Tata Steel was up by Rs 3 to Rs 178.

In the first half of the period under review, the bulls turned somewhat reluctant in enlarging their commitments. The overall feeling on the market is that some of the bulls are opting to book gains-judging by their offerings-at higher levels, although most market analysts feel that despite the political and economic upheavals, the undercurrent in the market continues to be firm.

This feeling appears to support the Digitized by Arya Santa ONT His Tong Marketmen that the Congress (1) will among marketmen that the Congress(I) will emerge victorious in the ensuing elections, elect a parliamentary leader without too much of trouble, and succeed in forming the next government. A stable government at the Centre, they feel, will be able to initiate positive measures for speedy economic growth Others feel that this is just optimism, as times have never been more uncertain than at present.

Meanwhile, Standard & Poorsthe international credit rating agency based in the US-downgraded the country's rating once again, taking it to the speculative (junk) grade. Interestingly, it has not really affected the market tangibly, with minimal movement on the indices.

It was not too long ago that an adverse report from the American fi nance powerhouse, Merrill Lynch Inc. on the Indian economy and, more specifically, on the country's financial sector had sent the stock-markets plunging from an all time high to below 1,000 points on the BSF Index. Either the markets have found their true operating level or, operators simply don't care anymore.

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				Change in Fortnight
	1991			to
	HIGH	row	CLOSE 6.6.91	52
Ashok Leyland	162 50	109 00	151.00	3.00 -
Associated Cemen	t 2780 00	1300.00	2575 00	65.00
Asian Paints	267.50	215.00	236 25	7.50
Atlas Copco	89.00	42.00	72.00	8.00 -
Bajaj Auto	680.00	500 00	595.00	
Baroda Rayon	630.00	400 00	475 00	
Bata India			79.00	3.00 +
Ballarpur				34.00
Birla Jute	287.00	168.00	269.00	6.00
Blow Plast	130 00	40.00	120.00	nil
Bombay Dyeing	245.00	150.00	210.00	10.00 -
Britannia Ind.	152 00	112.00	141.00	1.00 +
Brooke Bond	152.00	116 00	139.00	1.00
Cadbury India.	. 187.50	132.50	158.00	4.50 -
Castrol India	301 25	162.50	286.25	11 25 -
Century Textiles	5340 00	3625.00	5180.00	160.00+
Colgate Palmolive	338 75	250.00	307.50	
Cyanamid	142.50	76.25	128.75	6.25
DCM	300.00	123.00	211.50	21.50
Dunlop.	61 00	46 50	54.50	nil
E.I. Hotels	52.00	36 25	37.00	3.00
Escorts	172.00	127 00	152.00	7.00
Finolex Cables	260 00	140 00	211.25	2.50 -
Garware Nylon	43.75	30.00	30.00	2.00 -
G.F. Shipping	. 47 50	25.00	41.50	2.50 +
G.S.F.C.	217.50	150.00	197.50	11.25 -
Grasim Ind.	261.00	167.50	244.00	3.50 -
Guj. Ambuja Cemer	nt 180.50	90.00	164.00	4.50
Hind. Aluminium	277 50	200 00	261 25	4.25 +
Hind. Ciba	1300.00	650.00 1	190.00	30.00 -
Hindustan Lever	180.00	140 00	158.00	nil
Hindustan Motors	25 75	18 80	21.70	1 20
Hoechst	3650 00 2	500.00 2	800.00	50.00 +
ICI	.57.00	30.00	54.00	4.50 +
Indian Organic	47.50	30 00	38.00	1.25
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	1991			nge	
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ndian Rayon	137 50	104 50	124.00	11.50 -	
ngersoll-Rand		240.00	310.00		
TC		99.00	166.00	4.00	7
K. Synthetics		27.00	32.00	3.50	
Inetic Engineering	190.00	150.00	165.00	15.00	
Cirloskar Cummin	s. 156.25	95.00	131.00		
SB Pumps	225 00	160.00	195.00	10.00	
arsen & Toubro	140.00	90.00	110.00	2.00 -	
ipton	114 00	57.50	98.00	5.50	
ML Ltd.	37 50	21.00	23.00	2.50	
Madura Coats	260 00	175.00	188.00	1.00	
1&M	. 82 50	60.00	71.25	5.00	
Aastershares.	38.00	20.00	36.00	1.75 -	
fotor Industries	1225.00		1195.00	15.00	
lukand Ltd.	. 215 00	155.00	161.25		
lational Organic	1400.00	The state of the s	1190.00		
lestle India	.152.50	111.25	138.00	3.25	
irlon	25.00	16.00	22.50	1.00	
rkay Silk Mills	34 25	17.50	25.75	3.50	
eico Electronics	95.00	53.00	71.00	9.00	
remier Auto	57.00	30.00	46.50	6.50	
aymond	180.00	110.00	162.00	6.00	
eliance Industries	.163.75	91 25	141.50	9.50	
emens India	151.00	112.50	132.50		
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nriram Fibres	44 00	33.00	42 75		
KF Bearings	2825 00 1	650.00 2	2425.00	250.00	
the consense his consenses	65.00	33.00	57.50	1.50 +	
ita Steel	196.00	170.00	173.50		
elco	240.00	142.50	222.50	7.50	
tan Watches	93 75	58.00	82.50	1.50	
im Organic.	170.00	102 50	156.00	5.25	
deocon Int.	285.00	180.00	205.00		
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Canada	Dollar	1	18 3963	18.2155
Denmark	Kroner	1	3.1338	3 1021
Egypt	Pound		6.4449	6.3746
France	Franc .	. 1	3 6036	3.5149
Germany	DM		12.1951	12.8906
Hong Kong	Dollar	. 1	2 7248	2.6985
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	1 0886	1 0695
Iran	Rial	100 .	. N/A	N/A
Italy	Lira	100	1 6261	1 6059
Japan	. Yen	100	15.3610	14.9701
Kenya	Shilling	.1.	0.7641	0 7559
Kuwait	Dinar	1.	N/A	N/A
Malaysia	Dollar	1.	7 6124	7 5381
Mauritius	Rupeo	. 1.	1 3338	1 3048
Nepal	Rupee	1	0 7356	0 7262
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Singapore	Dollar	. 1	11 8731	11 7550
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Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.5140	0 5055
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Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.1013	0.0994
Thailand .	Baht	100	33 2997	80.9179
UK .	Pound .	1	35 4421	35 1803
USA	Dollar	-	21 0748	20.8768
UAE	Dirham		N/A	N/A
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- To function like an entrepreneur, with a high degree of responsibility towards shareholders/investors, as the Company's Management firmly believes in regularly declaring dividends to investors/shareholders, year after year



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■ The right candidate will be of technical bent of mind and high productivity oriented-cum-sound financial analyst with shrewd marketing acumen, supported by modern management knowledge/ techniques and must have worked in a computer-oriented environment. Above all, he will necessarily be a systems-oriented person

- He must be constantly open to the learning process and a leader of men, while being an effective team builder and moving south
- This then is the man: Being at the helm, he is a professional executive to the core, with the rateability to transform the vision of the Board of Directors into REALITY. In other words, he is totally attuned with the definite conviction to achieve the Company's objectives without deviating from laid-down systems, founded on "sacrosanct" principles

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growth possibility within our client's organisation in realistic terms, within the stated span of time, then we definitely need you.

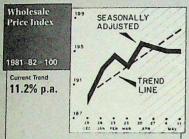
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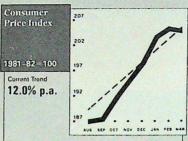
THUMBPRINT 69791

Over the fortnight, industrial output rose somewhat. However, with stagnant credit and infrastfuctural constraints, one the indian wife in Gangotti of items in the 1st fortnight of May 1991 growth accelerate, nor does it appear sustainable. Add lower electricity generation to the mess and the picture is very bleak.

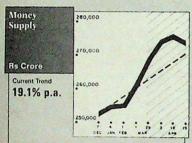
All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.



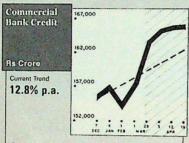
The index of wholesale prices remained stable, a good sign. The general fear is that the rate of inflation can only go up.



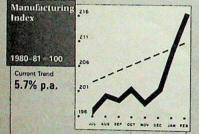
The consumer price index was stable, mirroring the trend in wholesale prices. But how long will this last?



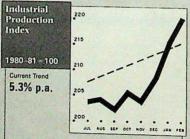
Money supply jumped, but the BBI's credit squeeze took off the heat-monetary restraint is essential at this point.



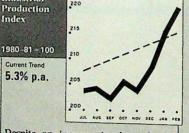
Commercial bank credit was stagnantgovernment, not private credit should be curtailed.



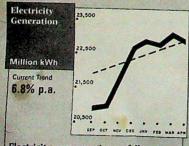
Manufacturing output rose, but as with industrial production, the trend rate of growth remains quite low.



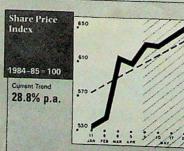
industrial production, growth in this key area has been deficient.



Despite an increase in the index of

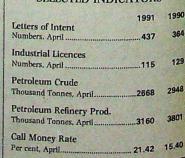


generation fell sharply-this does not augur well for industry, which is already quagmired.



Share markets continued to absorb shocks, and as effective production levels rose, remained buoyant.

# SELECTED INDICATORS



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100 INDIA TODAY ◆ JUNE 30, 1991



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Raiiv's men: Left in the lurch

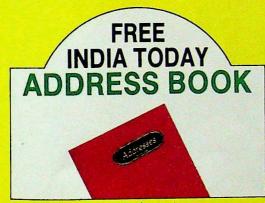


Back on the **Election Trail:** Quick change of gears



And miles to go before I sleep...

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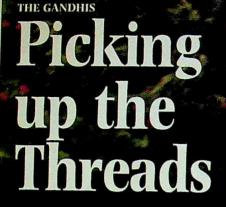
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Three weeks after the brutal moment that shattered their lives, Sonia, Rahul and Priyanka are still trying to put together the pieces of life without Rajiv.



### By HARINDER BAWEJA

HERE is an eerie silence that has settled like a shroud over 10. \_ Janpath since the tragedy that overtook its occupants. Now shielded from public access by a heavy cordon of security, it has acquired the image of a forbidding fortress. Inside the sprawling bungalow, two weeks after the brutal moment that destroyed their lives in one blinding flash, Sonia, Rahul and Priyanka are still trying to put together the pieces of their existence.

A life without Rajiv? For Sonia, Priyanka and Rahul, it is a big question mark. A question to which they will never find an answer. For this closelyknit family always walled within a heavily-guarded fortress, Rajiv was the centre of their existence. He shaped Sonia's life and it was he who was the

children's idol.

Suddenly Sonia finds herself living in a void. She has to do the very things that she had studiously avoided so far. Like walking through the house to the residential office to receive dignitaries and Congress(I) leaders and workers. Earlier, there was always a sharp distinction between the office and home. It was Rajiv, who after spending endless hours confabulating with partymen, returned to the house, where Sonia kept the home fires burning.

Now, it is Sonia who is meeting the people in her husband's office. Requests for appointments are already pouring into the 10. Janpath office. In fact, barely had Sonia reached home after the funeral when people started following her there and the heads of states started calling saying they wanted to pay their condolences in person. A tired Sonia and the children were up till as late as 11 o'clock in the night receiving the dignitaries who kept coming in.

At that point it was decided that a time be fixed for Sonia to receive visitors as she couldn't possibly receive people all day long. Unless close friends were dropping in to spend time with her. Or like the time when President R. Venkataraman came to call on Sonia. It is an outwardly calm Sonia who meets the visitors. Ironically, it is the visitors who invariably break down while recounting their memories of Rajiv Gandhi. Sonia, however, is stoic, even though each visitor is a painful reminder of the times that were and will never be.

She now meets people everyday between five and seven in the evenings by appointment for five to ten minutes each. The office shortlists the names and puts them before her for approval. The request to all visitors: "The meeting has been fixed only so you can pay your condolences. Please see that you don't

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et Madam." This request is spew made to the Congress(I) MPs party leaders, some of whom still she will change her mind and the plunge into politics.

"Nothing hurts her more. She is wing for a husband who she er wanted to join politics. How people be so insensitive?" asks a e friend, adding that."she needs e alone, so she can come to terms hlife". Coming to grips with that hat the family is finding difficult. not only are they pained over the th, they are finding it excruciatto get over the manner in which was killed.

THE trauma that Rahul and Priyanka are living with is the sheer brutality of Rajiv's death. vish the magazines hadn't printed tures of Rajiv Gandhi's body," s Rupika Chawla, a close friend of ia. Rupika and Sonia met reguly at the National Gallery of Mod-Art and later at the National seum, where Sonia spent many urs restoring oil and canvas paints, for which she had a passion. ends like Rupika are now trying to Sonia out of her despair. Like, ing her about the oil paintings. aia responds by asking a question then again falls silent.

The gory image of their father ng face downwards constantly unts the children, and the quesn uppermost on their minds is: Tho did it?" Priyanka is particuly traumatised. Recalls Kanta gra, a friend who has been like a

ther to the family since Gandhi's death: riyanka always called father, 'the handnest man'. And they er even got to see their her's face." And now y have to live with the lesome image of a

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uled body splattered with blood. Acding to friends, the children, particuly Priyanka, read all newspapers and gazines with a vengeance. She goes ough every word written about her her, especially the stories relating to progress made by the investigating m probing the assassination. Rahul en walks across to the office where staff sits or to the senior officials the security set-up discussing the tive of the assassination. Confides a ind: "It is as if their turbulent minds be put to rest if they find answers to was behind the assassination and

Rahul and Priyanka are following the investigation as if peace will come from knowing who was behind the killing.

why it was done."

Friends are a major source of solace for the children. Friends who spend the better part of the day with them, or just sit back in the room when Priyanka and Rahul go to be by their mother's side. Even sitting with her for the two hours that she is meeting people. Especially Priyanka, who almost makes it a point to be there when the politicians come in or when people from Amethi come. Priyanka, like Sonia, knows a lot of the Amethi women and children by name. Amethi, in fact, say their friends, is a strong emotional link, which Sonia

Digitized by Arva Samai Foundatioর প্রেমিকির্মিশী de Gangotri Would not like seen broken. For her it will always be her husband's constituency. A place, that they nurtured together, with tenderness and care.

Meanwhile, painful memories are all that Sonia has to live by. Memories that flash past every time she goes through the mail that is pouring in by the thousands. People from all over the world-known and condolence unknown-writing notes to her. Telling her of their impressions of her husband. Sonia, probably in an effort to keep herself occupied, spends a lot of her time sorting out the mail. She's done this before to help her mother-in-law when Sanjay died and again to help Rajiv with the mail after Mrs Gandhi was killed. All the letters have to be replied and Sonia is very particular about that. A close friend remembers how the children used to enthusiastically sit with their parents, drawing up a list of people to post New Year greetings to. "Sonia was always very meticulous. Writing out the cards herself, choosing the words.'

Now too, she's carefully marking out the 'thank you' notes, choosing the language, often writing in her own hand. And it's a stupendous and time consuming job, given the sheer bulk of the mail. Thanking the Congress(I) for their words of solace. saying that she and her children "are overwhelmed by the depth of your concern and the love and affection shown to us by you". Referring to the assassination as her husband's ultimate sacrifice for his beloved country, she hopes that it will be "a source

> of strength to each Congressman and woman. Let it infuse each one of them with greater determination to work unitedly in upholding the values of the Congress Party so dear to him, and towards fulfilling his dream of a strong,

united India".

It is the evenings which stretch out long and lonely. For it was the time that Sonia, Priyanka and Rahul really looked forward to-when Rajiv would return home and they'd all huddle together on the couch, the dogs sitting around them waiting for Rajiv to take them out into the lawns for a run. Now, as Amitabh Bachchan who visits the family often just to be with the kids who draw comfort in his company, says: "It (life) is a period of nothingness. Of not knowing what to do. Or what to say. What can you do? But they are being brave. I

JUNE 10, 1991 . INDIA TODAY 103



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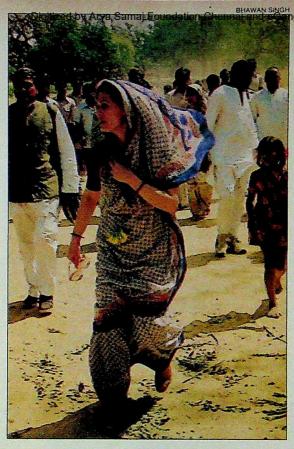
Dinner time is particularly painful. For Pandit Nehru had passed down the tradition of dinner always being a meal shared with the family-however great the pressures of work. Rajiv too forgot all about politics and its tensions the minute he reached home. Instead he'd relax with Sonia and the children who'd invariably be watching video. The family shared a love for music and movies. At times, lazy to get up and go to the table, they'd just sit there and munch sandwiches. Now dinner is like an ordeal. Each of them is aware of the others' thoughts, yet they are cautious not to voice them.

Over the past six months, Rajiv's packed schedule did AS By not allow him to come home till well past midnight. Yet the children always waited up for him. Rahul, while on holiday in Delhi, would often go to the airport to pick up his father

who would be returning home after a gruelling election campaign. And it was to spend more time with his father, say friends, that he even accompanied Rajiv to the Bihar election tour where they were mobbed. De-

scribes a family associate: "Theirs was a very special bond. It was the same with Sonia. A deep and interdependent relationship." Sonia, being a late sleeper, was normally awake until Rajiv returned home. An asthma patient-and the attacks have returned-it is difficult for her to fall asleep. Now she has her mother, Paola, staying with her, helping her pick up the threads of her life, changed suddenly in a second as the assassin pressed the button clasped to her waist.

And therein lies the tragic irony. Sonia, the Italian bahu, who for 23 long years learnt, lived and inculcated everything that was Indian, now suddenly finds herself rudderless and without an anchor. Over the years, recalls Kanta Dogra, Sonia had become closer to Mrs Gandhi than she was to her own mother. And now no one remains of the family she had learnt and loved to live for. Alone, without the people who gave meaning to her life and being.



Amethi is an emotional link which Sonia would not like seen broken. For her it will always be Rajiv's constituency.

> Reluctant by nature to confide in anyone but her husband, Sonia's real companions-and friends-have always been the children-Priyanka and Rahul. Having had a strict and disciplined upbringing herself, Sonia didn't want the same for her children. A disciplinarian yes, but not strict.

> ONSCIOUS still of the disciplinary element, Sonia is certain that she wants Rahul to go back to Harvard and finish his graduation. Never mind if that leaves her and Privanka alone. This perhaps is the only decision that Sonia has made about an unsure and insecure future.

> The children's education was always a fetish with both Sonia and Rajiv. They were certain the children had to go to boarding school which is why Rahul was sent to Doon School and Priyanka enrolled at Welhams. The disciplinary element was evident once again, when Priyanka was made

190 to return a pup gifted to her by

an aunt because Priyanka kept saying that she couldn't go to a hostel as there would be no one to take care of the pup then.

Ever since the assassination, Sonia has been moving around the house, a shadow of her original self. A lifeless figure draped in white. The saree pallu draped around her head, each time she is with people. There is no outside contact except through the papers-and that too only the portions that Privanka tells her to read. Most of the telephone calls too Priyanka is attending to. The only time that Sonia has left the precincts of the house-other than when she was participating in Rajiv's last rites, of immersion of ashes-was when she went to Jawaharlal Nehru's samadhi at Shanti Van on May 27 for his death anniversary.

Even the terveen (a prayer ceremony for the deceased on the 13th day after the death)

> was a quiet affair. Only a few close friends and family were invited. After the prayer ceremony-when Ganesh is worshipped and ganga jal sprinkled in the house-Rahul served food to 21 Brahmins who in turn blessed him. In

keeping with Hindu traditions which she has come to believe in, friends say Sonia will go through the traditional 40 days of mourning. "Nobody had asked her to but I noticed that she has taken off all her jewellery on her own. Slowly, we will bring her back to wearing colours other than white," says a close family friend.

Friends have suggested that she take the children and go to Italy for a while. But Sonia, they say, is reluctant. India, she thinks, is where her destiny lies. "She might take up social work, says relative Gautam Kaul. One thing she would like to do is create a memorial for her husband, as there are memorial trusts for Indira Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.

For the moment though, the family is trying to get itself together. Sonia, as one of her friends revealed, is wondering if dying as a pilot may have been a better and preferable end than the way in which Rajiv eventually went.

# Unmatched office space from a prestigious name...

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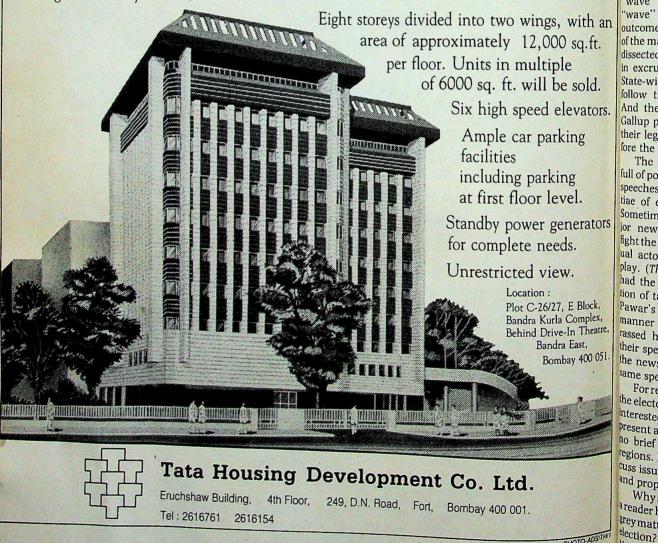
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# Cliched Coverage



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ly interrupted by Rajiv Gandhi's brutal assassination.

As soon as the elections were announced, our papers swung into action like an army raring to go. Battal-

ions are marched off to individual constituencies; the "sensitive" constituencies are duly highlighted. The questions do not change. Is there a "wave" or isn't there a "wave" affecting the final outcome? The chances of the main leaders are dissected several times in excruciating detail.

State-wide assessments follow thick and fast.

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The newspapers are full of politicians' election speeches and the minutiae of electoral politics. Sometimes, even the major newspapers tend to fight the battles of individual actors in the power play. (The Times of India had the dubious distinction of taking up Sharad

Gallup polls, which have

their legitimate place be-

fore the election dates.

Pawar's cause after Rajiv's death in a manner that could only have embarassed him.) The politicians recycle their speeches many times over, and the newspapers dutifully publish the same speeches day after day.

For readers who are not involved in the electoral process as participants or interested parties, the newspapers present a confusing picture. There are no brief to-the-point assessments of regions. Little attempt is made to discuss issues, apart from retailing hype and propaganda.

Why should this be so? Why should a reader have to wade through acres of they matter to find out the essence of an election? There are many reasons. Newspapermen are part of the Indian milieu and we as a people do tend to be

insular. Besides, we are creatures of habit. Once the drill for a general election is set, everyone follows it to the last about-turn. And the whole object of the exercise is not to enlighten the general reader but to cater to the needs of the 'in' crowd, composed largely of politicians and fellow journalists.

Besides, none of our newspapers has shown any inclination to reform the traditional structure where the desk is the most neglected; all the kudos The sparks of originality we have seen in pithy assessments and mood pieces in the daily press have been apparent in the newer papers (*The Telegraph* of Calcutta is one example) rather than in the old established ones. The point that seems to have been lost is that wider election coverage is not necessarily better coverage.

If only the daily press would take a lesson from the weeklies and magazines or even the weekly editions of

> some of the daily patpers, it would benefit. By their very nature, weeklies and magazines have to take an overview although many

of them rely on sensationalism, rather that analysis, to make their mark.

The Sunday edition of *The Times of India* has shown the way in giving an overall view of elections in an intelligible manner. If

those concerned with daily papers suggest that they do not have the luxury of time.

they do not know what modern journalism is all about. It is not the time factor but the weaknesses of the desk that make election reporting

by newspapers so dreary.

Those who have been gunning for Doordarshan on its dismal performance in coping with Rajiv's assassination are barking up the wrong tree. Government-controlled and run as Doordarshan is, the first and understandable tendency is to wait for instructions from the authorities. And the initial delay in reacting to a major event is then sought to be made up with any number of politicians reading their peroration on the box.

The cure for the malady is known to all—free Doordarshan from government control. But the political establishment does not want to lose a propaganda tool and there is not enough pressure to force a change, cosmetic changes like the Prasar Bharati concept notwithstanding.



their speeches and these are dutifully published in newspapers under big headlines.

Shekhar asks elite to help uplift poor papers under big headlines.

go to reporters in the field. The result is that there is simply not the wherewithal or incentive for the desk to perform better.

Let us see how a general election could be covered. Given a strong desk and good direction, all political leaders' selection speeches would be pulled together, rating one or two paragraphs on merit. There would be obvious scope for descriptive writing, on the mood of the electorate.

Assessments of regions could be run at moderate length, highlighting the issues or pointing out how the refractors have pushed the real issues to the background. Coverage of individual constituencies with leading politicians in the fray would hold some meaning if it were done in moderation.

JUNE 30, 1991 . INDIA TODAY



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### NEPAL

# Challenge of Change

# Koirala faces an avalanche of problems

HEN Girija Prasad Koirala, was sworn in as prime minister of Nepal last fortnight, he could not help remembering Rajiv Gandhi's famous quote: "People's expectations are scary." Democracy has finally dawned on the tiny Himalayan kingdom but Koirala has an arduous task—nursing a battered economy back to health, arresting spiralling prices, salvaging the law and order and, above all, ensuring that democracy puts down roots.

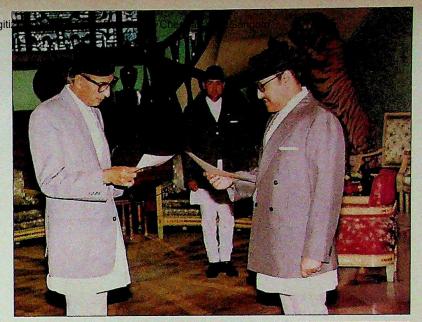
An uneasy impatience is palpable everywhere. Nepalis want democracy to translate their dreams into reality. What they have instead are all the teething problems that accompany sudden freedom. The administration is lax and uncaring, issues are being swept under the carpet and it is the common man who is paying the price. Prices have jumped by over 30 to 40 per cent. Asks Binod Budathoki, a taxi driver in Kathmandu: "What is the use of freedom if we cannot afford food?"

As the results of Nepal's first elections in 32 years poured in last month, the world sat up to take notice as it saw the sudden upsurge of the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist) which won 69 seats in the 205-member House of Representatives. The Nepali Congress (NC) managed to get a majority with 110 seats.

Stung by the unexpected success of the leftists, the NC decided Koirala was the best man to take on the Opposition. The question currently exercising many minds is whether the NC will be able to govern effectively or whether it will get bogged down in a protracted confrontation with the communists, who already have an eye on the next elections. Their hope is that Koirala will fail to rise to the challenge. General Secretary Madan Bhandari asserts: "We will never disappoint the people. We will have to resort to agitational methods if the Government fails."

With promises of land to the landless, social justice, a new deal for the poor and free education, the commu-

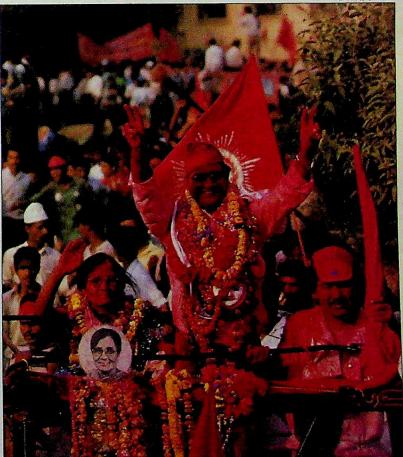
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Uneasy impatience is palpable. Teething problems that accompany sudden freedom are apparent.

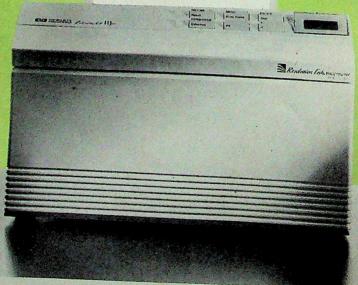
Koirala being sworn in by the King (top); Madan Bhandari: strong showing

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TT 70 of their success. They were also helped by their 18 years of hard graft in building a grassroots base among various sections of the population. Another factor explaining their success was the fervent anti-India campaign that the party orchestrated, calling the NC "agents of India who were out to sell the country's interests". In rural Nepal, communist speakers claimed that the NC would treat all rivers flowing

from Nepal to India as "common rivers" and Nepal's sovereignty would be diluted by a common currency.

In the middle of all the flux, one thing remains certain. The left is strong and determined to show the world that communism is not a moribund ideology. There are 22 factions of communists in Nepal. Their immediate aim is to unite and have a common goal by the time of the next elections. Says Roshan Tuladhar, a young businessman and ardent communist: "For a poor country like ours only the communists can deliver the goods.

On the difficult issues facing the country, Koirala has little choice but to take some hard decisions, particularly over Nepal's dependence on American aid-over \$1 billion annually. Many Nepalese feel it is time they discarded the begging bowl. World Bank projections say that Nepal's prospects for



Injured Congress activist: violent trend

economic growth are dim-a sad pre-. diction for a country where 40 per cent of the people live in absolute poverty.

One reassuring aspect of the elections, however, was that they appear to have inaugurated a two-party system. Most of the other parties contesting the elections disappeared from the scene altogether. This at least holds out the promise of political stability while the new administration grapples with

pressing economic and social problems. Even the communists have promised to be a responsible opposition. They can afford to be magnanimous in defeat. All they have to do is sit back and hope that Koirala and the NC will fail in the face of the challenges ahead of them. If they do, the communists can look forward to the next elections in the knowledge that they stand to reap a harvest borne of people's frustrated expectations.

-RAMESH MENON in Kathmandu

PRIME MINISTER G.P. KOIRALA

# "Democracy will flourish"

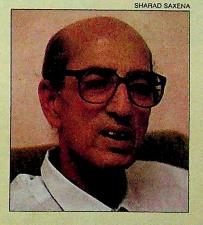
The new prime minister, Girija Prasad Koirala, 66, took an active part in the Indian freedom struggle before devoting himself to the democracy movement in Nepal in the early '50s. In an interview with Principal Correspondent RAMESH MENON in Kathmandu, he spoke about his government's immediate aims. Excerpts:

On the Cabinet's priorities.

Tackling the law and order situation, arresting inflation, developing agriculture and agro-based industry and tourism. Our government aims to provide drinking water to every village.

On why the Nepali Congress did not do as well as expected.

We were over-confident. But nor can we deny our organisational



Koirala: confident approach

weaknesses or the performance of the interim government.

On the communists' strength.

For nearly three decades the communists have been organising themselves systematically. They penetrated the education system in a big way, winning over teachers and then students. They also have catchy slogans for the young.

On the future of democracy.

If we behave and work within the framework of democracy, it will be bright. If the King and the people work together, democratic institutions and values can be developed.

On the fear that democracy may degenerate into disorder.

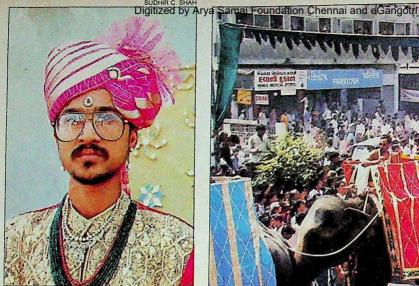
The fear is undoubtedly there. The communists are determined to start a class war. But if political parties behave with responsibility and follow democratic traditions, democracy will be able to flourish.

On being a donor-dependent economy.

We have to re-build Nepal from scratch. We do need donors for development but at the same time we must strive to create conditions in which we can eventually become self-sufficient.

On relations with India.

I want to maintain good relations with India. Economically and geographically, we are closer to India than any other country and our interest lies in building close ties.



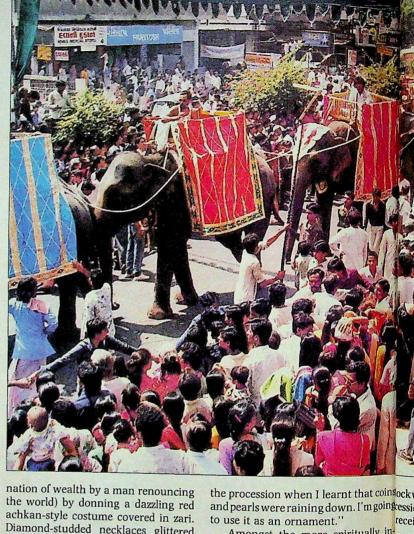
# **Diamonds** are not Forever

# Millionaire renounces material wealth for solace in spiritualism

HE occasion was rich in paradox. A multi-millionaire diamond merchant embracing the austerities of priesthood. A renunciation-of-theworld ceremony so gloriously ostentatious that it made Hollywood's Oscar extravaganza resemble a tea party in a dhaba. The intimate mingling of God and Mammon as Jain priests collected the precious jewels which Atul Kumar Shah flung to the ground because they were sacred offerings while the more prosaically-inclined grabbed them in the hope of raising some cash.

To the people of Ahmedabad it seemed as though one of the great Tirthankars himself had appeared to take diksha. Atul, a lanky 29-year-old who had spent his life cocooned amongst all the creature comforts that wealth could buy, had chosen to forsake all his worldly goods and the pleasures of the flesh in favour of a barefoot existence and a begging bowl.

On the morning of June 1, Atul began his "varshidaan" (voluntary do-



Diamond-studded necklaces glittered around his neck and heavy gold rings weighed down his hands. On his body alone he carried precious stones worth over Rs 60 lakh. Once suitably attired, he began a slow journey mounted on a silver-plated chariot drawn by seven caparisoned elephants. The elephants had plenty of company-bringing up the rear were over 50 beautifully decorated horses, 40 camel carts and scores of folk troupes dancing all along the 8km route. As the cavalcade inched through the crowds, Atul scattered gold and silver coins, pearls and diamonds. The total worth of all the gems was estimated to be Rs 2.50 lakh.

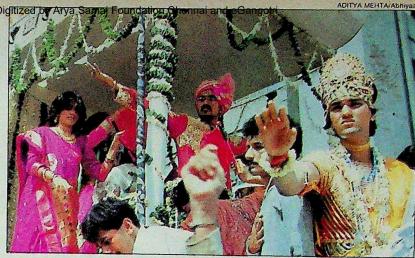
It was a day when Ahmedabad's burghers were delightfully indifferent to the searing heat as they jostled to pick up the manna raining down. One lucky textile worker who managed to pluck a pearl from the air said: "I rushed to join

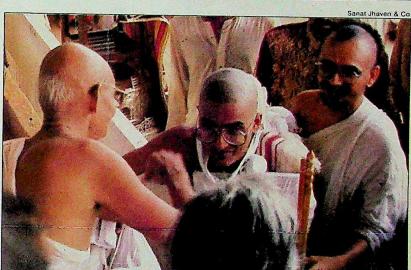
the procession when I learnt that coinsockwise and pearls were raining down. I'mgoing ession: receiving

Amongst the more spiritually inclined Jains in the one-lakh strong ceremon crowd the feeling was one of reverence tof seein for the offerings. Said Vinodbhai Parikhig down a textile trader who walked away with a) unlike I gold coin: "We consider varshidaan offer sing to h ings to be sacred. If tied around the neck, won't h the coins can cure ailments. We deriver mothe spiritual inspiration from them."

Atul's final farewell to the material world took place the next day when a year-ol senior Jain monk completed the cere. Suresh mony. Around 1.50 lakh excited people ed the th filled the large Sardar Patel Stadium attache shouting "Dikharsha Amar Raho". Atul, after wh stepped on to the specially erected structure and sha stepped on to the specially erected in the day of the head sharp ture while devotional music played in the a the background. His relatives applied applied ngstrich tilak on his forehead to mark the end of donate tilak on his forehead to mark the their last link with him. His father in the Dalpat, who presides over the family s new r diamond business (annual turnover Rs 2.50) nearly Rs 100 crore) appeared moved by business







that coinsockwise from left) Atul Shah; the I'mgoingession; distributing diamonds; and teceiving blessings: glitzy affair tually in-

h strong ceremony. Or perhaps it was the reverence t of seeing all his hard-earned cash ai Parikhag down the drain. Atul's mother, yay with a unlike her husband had given her daanofier sing to his venture, said: "Now my theneck won't have to take birth from an-We deriver mother's womb."

material HE oldest living Jain monk, 97y when a year-old Acharya Ramchandra the cere- Sureshwarji Maharaj, then preed people ed the traditional Jain "Ogho" (a Stadium attached with cotton strips) to ho". Atul, after which he took a bath and had ted structead shaved.

played in then a competition broke out s applied ngst rich Jain merchants to see who he end of donate the most money in the race donate the most money in the race is father in the privilege of announcing turnover is new name. The bidding began Rs 2.50 lakh and rose steadily. The businessmen were eventually up-

staged by diamond traders from Antwerp, Belgium, who stole the show by donating Rs 15 lakh. But finally they surrendered their right to announce the name to Atul's family-Muni Hitruchiji Vijayji Maharaj. A total of Rs 90 lakh was donated through the entire bidding. The diksha ceremony was followed by a caterer's nightmare-lunch for 1.50 lakh people. Atul's initiation into an ascetic priesthood cost his family a grand total of over Rs 1.50 crore. Nearly Rs 20 lakh were sunk on the 5,000 calendar-size invitations alone. Each invitation was accompanied by a 50gram silver coin worth Rs 300.

In the midst of all the pomp, the odd lone voice of dissent could be heard. Amarjit Singh Suri, who witnessed the occasion, observed: "If Atul really wanted to seek moksha and serve the poor, he should have donated all his wealth to a trust so that a school or hospital could be set up." Even some Jains disapproved. Satishbhai Shah, a small businessman, asked: "Where was

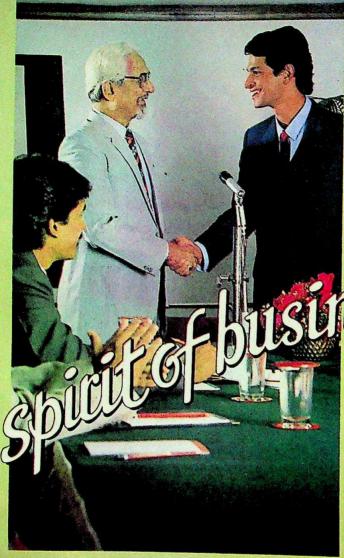
the need to put up such a show to mark renunciation? It could have been done in a sober manner and still be in keeping with Jain tradition." But Muni Hitruchiji Vijayji defends his behaviour: "My idea was to project the importance of renunciation. The idea was to inspire other millionaires.'

Hailing from a small village near Palanpur in northern Gujarat, Atul's first yearnings to become a priest occurred in 1983 when he heard the respected Jain Muni, Chandrashekhar Vijayji, speak. Apart from his mother, the reaction of his entire family was one of stupefied horror. But Atul's refused to be deflected from his mission. Before his momentous decision he was a normal. mischievous youngster who was once thrown out of his college hostel. Cricket and films were his passions. He is frank enough to admit that in his new avatar he will greatly miss books and poetry. The only pages he will ever open in the future are those of the Jain scriptures.

-UDAY MAHURKAR

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ECONOMIC LIBERALISATION

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## After secularism and resempation, the third in our series of debates on issues of national importance focuses on economic liberalisation.

HE story so far: in a bid to shake up a creaking economy, the Indian Government starts removing the shackles on industrial growth, one by one, from the mid-'80s. The rigours of production and distribution controls are eased, the strait-jacket of product-by-product licensing is loosened, imports are made simpler, and even the public sector gets a whiff of the fresh air of autonomy. The result? Industrial growth zooms, the economy booms, and the capital market blooms. But 1991 finds the Government's budget deficits widening menacingly, the

country's foreign exchange coffers emptying alarmingly enough to prompt the sale of gold, and inflation soaring into double digits.

Did liberalisation work in India? Did we have too much of it or too little? And now that painful medicine will be administered by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have we lost control over policy?

First, the good news. Almost all the 12 participants—a mix of politicians, policy makers and businessmen-at a symposium organised by INDIA TODAY in Delhi last month, suggested that liberalisation has barely begun. "We need liberation," argued L.C. Jain, a former member of the Planning Commission. That means freeing industry from the licence-permit raj and discretionary controls followed by lower protection to domestic industry from foreign competitors. Congress(I) spokesman and former finance minister Pranab Mukherjee said it couldn't work without political stability. The liberalisation has worked because of higher rates of growth—a point contested by Professor B.S. Minhas.

But, warned Bimal Jalan, who heads the prime minister's Economic Advisory Council, liberalisation has corollaries. And that's the bad news. If liberalisation means greater competition at home, inefficient industries must die. If the liberalisation so far has looked half-baked, it's because the greater freedom

for companies to enter certain areas has not been accompanied by the right to quit when the going gets tough. The result: lots of sick industries have tied up enormous bank money. Politicians find it difficult to let losing units to close, because of the job losses involved. But as ITC Chairman J.N. Sapru pointed out, by saving the job of the father today, you are robbing his sons and grandsons of future jobs.

What industry needs, said Thapar group Chairman L.M. Thapar, is a clear set of policies which you don't tinker with. Opinion, however, was somewhat divided on throwing

open the economy to all comers: that is freely allowing in foreign companies. dramatically lowering import tariffs, and making the rupee freely convertible into foreign currencies. If the group's Ramesh Chauhan had his way, only foreign companies bringing in hi-tech would be let in. Economist Kaushik Basu also had reservations about welcoming all and sundry. especially in an economy where existing levels of corruption could be exploited by them to meddle in the country's internal affairs.

But whether the country likes it or not, change there will be, said The Economic Times Editor T.N. Ninan, Because of the foreign exchange crunch, the country has to go to the IMF for a loan which will come with strings attached. The main condition could be that the Central Government should fix its fiscal deficit-the gap between what the Government spends and what it earns as tax revenue. Not a bad idea, for the Government is living beyond its means. "Our macro-economic policies have been faulty," said former RBI governor R.N. Malhotra.

Another area of reform may be partial privatisation of the public sector—a move supported by former Steel Authority of India chairman V. Krishnamurthy. His only caution: it can't be pushed through without the concurrence of labour. Ultimately, agreed BJP ideologue Jay Dubashi, liberalisation needs to be sold to the people.

#### THE PARTICIPANTS



PRANAB MUKHERJEE
Former Finance
Minister and
Congress(I) Spokesman



BIMAL JALAN
Chairman, Economic
Advisory Council
to the PM



R.N. MALHOTRA Former Governor, Reserve Bánk of India



J.N. SAPRU Chairman, ITC Ltd.



L.M. THAPAR Chairman, Thapar group of companies



L.C. JAIN Former Member, Planning Commission



B.S. MINHAS Professor, Indian Statistical Institute



Professor, Delhi School of Economics



JAY DUBASHI Economist and BJP Ideologue



T.N. NINAN
Editor,
The Economic Times



V. KRISHNAMURTHY Former Chairman, Steel Authority of India Ltd.



RAMESH CHAUHAN Chairman, Parle Beverages Group



# **WORKED?**

Bimal Jalan: I think the old system of direct, case by case, discretionary economic controls has to be abandoned wholesale for three reasons. One, it is purely administrative. The expansion of the Government and the state has ensured that the administration simply cannot cope with it. The second reason, which is more substantive, is that we have macro-economic policies which give signals contrary to what we do in ferms of day-to-day discretionary controls. For example, the tariff system would give one set of signals on whether certain industries should be set up here or there. But the five-year plan would say no, that those industries are non-priorities, you should be investing somewhere else. The licensing committee would come in and introduce a certain other set of considerations. So there is a total mismatch between our policies and our exercise of control.

The third point is that if we are going to have, say, what we hadthree governments in two yearsthen I think you have to take measures which are less discretionary, measures which rely less on the political system as it were.

There are certain corollaries to any liberalisation. You can't simply say that there should be no licensing. A corollary of domestic liberalisation has to be bankruptcies. Number two, you can't have domestic liberalisation which is independent of the kind of protective regimes that you are offering. For example, let's say anybody can set up a petrochemical plant and five people rush out to borrow money abroad to set up these plants. Now foreign loans are the Government's liability. So you have to devise methods which do not allow this sort of thing to happen.

R.N. Malhotra: Any degree of

zed by Arya simply be divorced from the overall macro-economic policies. And the macro-economic policies are faulty. Take the financial sector, for instance. Normally when we talk of liberalisation we think of liberalised interest rates, priced money and that sort of thing. The crux of financial liberalisation is giving the right signals, putting the right price-tags. In India, the budgetary deficits have been rather high and there has been a lot of preemption of funds by the public sector, either directly by the Government or as a result of the very expansionary policies followed by the central bank of the country. Thus you get into a situation where pre-emption is taking place and the money (interest rates) being paid is well below market rates, pushing the costs to someone else-either the financial institutions, or the depositors or the borrowers.

The major area which affects other

#### PRANAB MUKHERJEE



"When I started the loan mela scheme, I did not imagine that there would be loan waivers."

"I do not agree that the politician-bureaucrat nexus is standing in the way of changes."

"Can we open the manufacturing sector or the service sector to foreign investment? We can't. We can't upset the applecart within a very short period."

policies is the fiscal aspect. On the or hand, you are committed to bringing the budget into better balance. On the other hand, you are incurring expend tures—like the loan waivers—in a wa which will cause higher deficits. would say that while it's good talking about liberalisation and it is important that we liberalise, we must understan the total picture.

Jay Dubashi: We seem to be takin for granted that liberalisation would! good for the country. Fine, it is, The point is: how will the common ma react to it? His standard of life must h improved, prices must come down, th availability of products and service should increase, corruption should down. For instance, take the last 1 years. There has been liberalisation probably more since 1985 than before But our debts have gone up, budge deficits have gone up, borrowingshavihe '80s gone up and there is nothing at all ie have g the foreign exchange kitty. What te of gro

worse, prices have been going up. B.S. M don't think we've ever had this kin kherjee of inflation before.

Look at the liberalisation experar, grain ence over the last eight years. Quit n tonne. a few controls have been removed the prev Industries are doing very well, the prev stock market is up, profits are up. Secon growth is up.

But still the people are up the arms. Why is that? It means that the public scliberalisation are not relices didr benefits of liberalisation are not pel in procolating down, or may be, we are the first stage where the benefits are not supposed to percolate down. But not supposed to percolate down. But the first stage where the benefits are not bein ormous I find that all this is not bein at year. I explained to the people at all.

Pranab Mukherjee: I thin at level when we're talking of liberalisation ow that with reference to changes in poliar for the cies, if the policy prescription foe fact wa higher output and greater efficience is linked with distribution and jus tice, then it will percolate down to al levels of society.

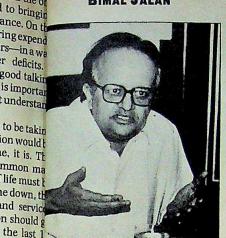
The liberalisation which wa initiated in 1985 has paid dividends We maintained a fairly stable price regime. Except in one drought year the rate of inflation was confined to a single-digit figure. Poverty allevia tion was there because the limited process of liberalisation since 198 ensured steady industrial growth And significantly, there was indus trial growth even in the 1987 drought year.

From the first plan to the fifth plan, the economy's annual average growth rate was 3.5 per cent But the growth rate was 5.5 per cent

t. On the or

peralisation than before up, budge

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bureaucracy is concerned, one aspect is inertia. Most bureaucrats, including myself, don't care about the outcome of what we are doing. We are doing it because it is the way it has been done."

Digitized by Arya Samai Foundation Chennai and eGangotri
"As far as the "If we are going to have three governments in two years policies have to be less discretionary."

> "A corollary of liberalisation has to be more bankruptcies."

> "You can abolish the Planning Commission tomorrow, but there has to be a mechanism to transfer Central grants to states."

owingshavihe '80s. You can't simply ignore it. ing at all ie have got out of the so-called Hindu ty. What te of growth.

going up. B.S. Minhas: Let me correct Mr ad this kin kherjee on some of the statistics oted. He talked about 1987-88. That tion experar, grain production was 138.5 milyears. Quil n tonnes against 142 million tonnes n remove the previous year. And the non-food ry well, that of agriculture grew rather than fits are ul. Second, that year we had enorare up i the cultithe public distribution system. So ansthatth ces didn't rise even with that little are not pel in production, which they would

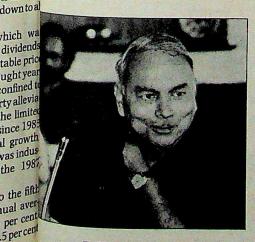
ve otherwise.
benefits at The third thing was that there was not bein ormous employment generation at year. In fact, the daily unemployeralisation ow that the poverty level fell that ges in political for the first time in Indian history, ription foe fact was that 1987 wasn't as big a

drought as people thought it to be ....

Kaushik Basu: What worries me is the thought of playing to the galleries, where you have to shape your policies by what the majority opinion is. If you really tie down engineers to designing aircraft and bridges according to the majority view, your bridges would not function, your aircraft would not take off. Policies should be drafted by professionals; it's for politicians to persuade the people about the goodness or badness of the policies. It is not for us to take the dictates of a majority view. I will give you just one example: prices. Inflation worries us all but the way political parties go about promising that in 100 days or 200 days they will control inflation, it smacks of controlling inflation through decree. And when you try to control inflation through decree, through the use of government laws and regulations directly, people at first love it. But if you give in to this kind of populism for some time, you will end up with a system where queues will get longer, efficiency will come down and, for those reasons, there will be an even greater pressure on prices.

Having said that, I want to make a few general comments. In some ways, India is a very free market economymore than many other economies. There aren't too many countries in the world where you can buy driving licences. I am not being facetious here; we can buy a range of items which ought not to be bought.

Minhas: Can I make a short point? We have had better growth because of liberalisation—or in spite of it—but one has also to look into what kind of growth there has been. If you take away the growth in GDP which is due to the growth of some non-economic



R.N. MALHOTRA

"If you have nationalised the financial sector whether it is banks, insurance or other financial services and then you control it through a ministry, you are controlling money and not really liberalising the economy."

"The conundrum is that you vote a government to power and then tell them that you need less government. Are Indian politicians really ready for it?"

"I see no reason why road transport should be in the public sector."

"As to whether by Arya Comai Fared at the page and eGa

I would welcome Marlboro if it came into the country, I say: why not? They can't take the pants off me."

"The problem in the public sector is that the shareholder sees the managing director every day."

liberal or you are not, either you take the plunge or you don't. It is like a pregnancy: either you are pregnant or you are not. You can not do it with one finger and then with another."



J.N. SAPRU

services-which will include defence—then the rates of growth in the '80s in terms of real value-added are not far from the Hindu rate of growth. So we have not been growing very much faster in the commodity producing sector and that's another reason for inflation.

L.C. Jain: I think, if we are not confined to the term liberalisation in our discussion then, in my view, liberalisation is an archaic term. We need liberation. Take Punjab, which is beset with terrorists. It abounds in small scale units. All of them have to close at about 4.30 or 5 p.m. so that workers can return home safely. They face terrorists after 5 p.m. But during the day, 35 inspectors visit the small scale factory and they don't let them function. Now, there are about 60,000 small units in Punjab and on an average there are 10 persons employed in each one. I have been told that the number of workers can be easily increased if they are freed of these inspec-

tors. When we talk about liberalisation, we are talking of Birlas, Tatas and others who have to come to Udyog Bhayan to get their licences. And they don't need liberalisation because licences are delivered at their homes. But the small sector needs liberation. At least liberate them from the inspector raj. I would say that ought to be on our agenda first.

Take another crucial area-energy. In the period that we have been talking about liberalisation in the industrial licensing system, load shedding has ranged from 50 to 100 per cent. You can have all the liberalisation but you can't perform. In energy, we have had a policy that says, yes, the private sector can also participate. But because they have these state electricity boards with huge losses, the first unstated condition is that anybody who enters power must enter at their terms. Which, in short, means that they should not be allowed to enter. I would even say that the energy sector

needs to be liberated from electricitie defin boards.

For real liberalisation, the Bhavan ns of ma will have to be dismantled, whether itie the Krishi Bhavan or Udyog Bhavan ign exc Dhirubhai Ambani can pay good renn dared for them. Unless you vacate thosugh the Bhavans, one kind of control you relations in is replaced by others. When it was sair we co that in certain cases licensing would bustries? replaced by DGTD (Directorate General for I of Technical Development) registra onstruc tion, the DGTD stipulated the same kind) or 140 of conditions for registration as the recomm had for licensing.

Ramesh Chauhan: Why don't wival, I'm scrap the whole industrial licensing is still system since there are already cg (capi What h tal goods import) licences, foreigrage lev collaboration approvals and so manjund 117 other things....

Dubashi: Mr Jain has been talking is 20 to about the Bhavans; I think the firstecting t Bhavan to be abolished should bustry to (Yojana Bhavan) the Planning Comams of de mission, and then Udyog Bhavan How ca

L.M. THAPAR



"You have created a situation where industry finds it easier to fight its battles in Udyog Bhavan insteadhe kinds of the market-place. The nexus of corruption, or whatever you want to call it, between industry and bureaucrats and the politicians suits all of them." ls being is

"With liberalisation, we do the old fox-trot: two steps lalan: As forward, one back; one step forward, two back."

"Give industry the right to exit. We'll then be sensible about whether we must go into an industry, erged. On

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nomy i led and y in the n we should abolish the Industries velopment & Regulation) Act.

Mukherjee: I do not agree with the v that the politician-bureaucratic us is standing in the way of bringabout the desired changes. If the rement decides to go the whole for changes, neither the civil serts nor the so-called nexus will stand he way. But to some extent our ress of change was faulty and we

ld not go whole hog. Whether we continue the process of ralisation or not is closely linked to political atmosphere in the country the next four or five years.

T.N. Ninan: I think the Indian

nomy remains the most conled and least liberalised econy in the whole world. We still electricitie definitions of monopolies in ns of total asset size and not in ne Bhavan ns of market structures. We still whetheritie the world's most restrictive Bhayan ign exchange laws. No one has good renn dared touch labour laws alcate thosugh they create all kinds of disolyourelations in investment decisions. it was said we changed laws of exit for gwould bustries? We have created the te Generard for Industrial and Financial registra onstruction (BIFR), but out of samekind) or 140 cases in which the BIFR on as the recommended closure of comlies because they are beyond y don't wival. I'm told that every single

l licensinge is still stuck in the courts.

dycg(capi What have we changed? The

es, foreigrage level of customs duties is d so manjund 117 per cent: this is a world ord. The average in most counen talking is 20 to 30 per cent. So you are k the firstecting the economy and Indian should bustry to a level that nobody even ning Comams of doing in any other coun-Bhavan How can any industry hope to xternally-oriented or hope to be petitive? We talk of moving n case by case and discretionary finds trols to tariff controls and nonretionary controls. But you look nstead he kinds of decisions the Governnt has been taking. You see beer liquor licences being cleared, y and nces for steel units and sugar s being issued. Each one of these em." a price which is paid to some tician in power. If this is not o steps retionary. I don't know what is. lalan: As far as the bureaucracy oncerned, one aspect is pure k." tia. We are doing it because it is way it has been done. But I ald like to comment more seriustry, ged. One, you say that you

n we should abolish the Industries Digithed by Abolishment own Bhannai and affiliation not going to stop some-

and that this may contribute to the solution of the problem. To my mind this is too simplistic. You can abolish the Planning Commission tomorrow, but there has to be a mechanism to transfer Central grants to the states. If you really want to do things, there has to be a commitment at the political level, which I think is emerging now. There has to be a public announcement of the policy objective. If you want to abolish the DGTD, it is not good enough to say that I am abolishing the DGTD. It requires a statement from someone with political authority that I am going to protect the indigenous industry by

L.C. JAIN



"The Tatas, Birlas and other big groups don't need liberalisation because licences are delivered at their homes."

"For real liberalisation, the Bhavans have to be dismantled: whether it's Krishi Bhavan or Udyog Bhavan. Ambani can pay good rent for them."

"The Government's first business is to protect life and property. It's not been able to do that. So less government in the economic sphere is for the country's good."

common to stop someone from coming into the country just because something is being indigenously produced.

Ninan: Import substitution has created non-competitive industries.

L.M. Thapar: I think industry also has a vested interest. You have created a situation where you find it easier to fight your battles in Udyog Bhavan instead of the market-place. The nexus of corruption, or whatever you want to call it, between industry and bureaucrats and the politicians suits all of them. Well, the point has been made earlier if you can't exist in the market-place, you die. Give the right of exit. We

will then be sensible about whether we must go into an industry or not, if it's worthwhile or not. But what happens today? The Government opens a particular field to the private sector which was closed earlier and people rush in whether they have the expertise or not. Take telecommunications: 16 companies went into the manufacture of EPABX (Electronic Telephone Exchanges). All knew that blood was going to be shed along the way.

Companies went in because our own industries, where we have know-how and technology, are closed to us. We can't expand, we can'tdothis, we can't do that. We do the old fox-trot out here: two steps forward, one step back; one step forward, two steps back. We should start learning to walk now. Have a dance floor. If you don't fall off the dance floor, you should be allowed to do what the hell you want to. Industry has been protected for so long. So a change is going to be harsh.

Malhotra: Somebody said industry has been more pampered than hampered.

Thapar: Absolutely, there's no doubt about it. At the end we know we are going to pay the price for it.

J.N. Sapru: The question we really have to ask ourselves is why we are talking about liberalisation. It is because for 40 years nothing has performed or not adequately enough. Some growth has taken place, but obviously that growth is not enough. It's like pregnancy: either you are or you're not pregnant. You can't do it with one finger and then another. You are either a liberal or you are not, either you take the plunge or you don't. The real question is: if we do not take this plunge, where will we be 10 years

bances. The point is how less painful we can make that. But painful it will be. Industries will go sick. Every country has sick industries, India will not be unique. But let us realise that if those sick industries are allowed to continue, there is a cost to be paid.

Thapar: You should be punished for making an industry sick but assets will not go waste unless they are absolute junk.

Sapru: Unless we allow our companies to increase their capacity and become globally competitive, we're just wasting our time. In this context, I think the major stumbling-blocks have been reservation of production for the small sector and subsidies. Why do you give reservations and why do you provide subsidies? You must understand it is to cover up inefficiency and it's a hell of a price to pay. Look at the country's industrial structure. On the one hand, you have the top business houses and then there are thousands of halfsick and three-fourths-sick small units. There's no middle sector because your policies are all warped. As far as protecting employment in the small sector is concerned, I say that by giving employment to the father today, you are depriving employment to the son and grandson in the future.

Ninan: I think the cost of liberalisation is an issue which has to be focussed on. There's a whole school of thought which argues that the economic problems we are facing today are a result of liberalisation. It's important to distinguish between liberalisation and economic mismanagement.

Minhas: The two are interlinked. You have inefficiency because you don't let things work.

Ninan: You can liberalise the economy as much as you want but if you have complete fiscal mismanagement, then you're going to get inflation. People blame liberalised imports for the foreign exchange situation and the debt that has accumulated. But it's important to recognise and accept that we still have a low percentage of imports as a ratio to GDP. Liberalised imports cannot therefore have caused the foreign exchange problem. So the issue is government mismanagement and not liberalisation per se.

V. Krishnamurthy: In the '80s we didn't make a complete attempt

from now? It wild taked in year a sade of the fact is that if our any change means disturped productivity has gone up in the '80s it can be attributed to liberalisation. Statistics show that the percentage of people below the poverty line has declined in the '80s. We all believe that high growth rates and efficiency can come about only in a deregulated situation. What do we mean by this? Besides doing away with licensing constraints on capacity expansion and freedom of both entry and exit, we should also not make distinctions between the public and private sectors. We should only talk of efficient and inefficient sectors. And though Mr Jain may not agree, I think we'll have to abolish reservation for small scale industries. Eventually, we have to reach a situation leading to

B.S. MINHAS



"I think the public sector has got into a number of noninfrastructural areas essentially on account of the insatiable lust for power on the part of bureaucrats and politicians."

"Some of us have been warning about the high fiscal deficit since the mid-'80s. We were called panicky. A lot of people called me unpatriotic."

"How do we get out of this mess? You will have to deflate across the board. I don't see any other way out."

the de-nationalisation of the banking sector and the free floating of the rupee

I wish to illustrate how much dam age this regulated economy has done Studies have shown that the single largest contributory factor for the high cost of steel produced in the country has been price and distribution con trols. Both myself and Russi Mod (chairman of Tata Steel) have been talking about it, but nobody has done anything so far. All that has been don HAT is that the Iron and Steel Controller in Calcutta has been renamed as the development commissioner for iron and steel. No matter which part comes to power, the circumstancehauhan demand liberalisation.

e again Ninan: I don't think we are intment in control of the pace or direction shown t reform. The IMF would impose itn comp own policy changes and you are, in of fore any case, in a situation where youly legit don't have total control over when inve you are going to do. And the mone'd be ted (foreign exchange) that you need have will come only at a price. So changing the is going to come in any case. If we for sco had done it on our own muchrs. Baja earlier, we would have been itars. The greater control of the mode aneavily in pace. You have to pay a heavy pricinan: Th for the change, there could be larged of for scale social unrest. f you ha

Malhotra: What is necessary icting yo that the labour unions get the righn invest kinds of political signals. I personally aim ally feel that it's not so much of at. That I economic problem. The real answer exportis paying proper compensation tariff prot workers if an industry closes downmy that

Thapar: That's half the problem, then The other half relates to productivicing po ity in Indian industry which is kind of fo fraction of what it is in other parts o the world. Productivity has to go ul and that means creating a psycho logical atmosphere in the country st that workers would be willing to work eight hours a day.

Jain: I'm sorry that people ar only talking about labour pro ductivity. Energy intensity and ma terial intensity of production ar equally important. Under the Government's textile policy, closur was permitted and a number ( textile mills have closed. There we to be a fund to pay the workers. Til today, some two lakh workers have lost their jobs but they have no received a penny by way of compensation. So this one-sided view that labour and politicians are really the nigger in the woodpile is not full explanation.

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hich part cumstancehauhan: I don't think anybody e against the concept of foreign we are intment in the country. But studies direction (shown that in the case of very few impose itn companies is there a positive you are, in of foreign exchange. Now I feel where youly legitimate reason for having over whan investment in the country the moneid be technology. Unfortunately, t you need have gone to the extent of So changing the need for foreign collabocase. If we for scooter seats and rear-view own muchrs. Bajaj has been making them e been itars. These kinds of collaboration mode aneavily import-oriented.

neavy pricinan: There are two issues. One is ıld be largınd of foreign investment that you

you have very high tariff walls ecessary icting your domestic sector, the et the righn investment that you get will . I personally aim at jumping those tariff nuch of al. That kind of investment will eal answee export-oriented. But if you have nsation tariff protection and you have an oses downmy that's internationally come probleme, then this country becomes productivercing point for supplies abroad. which is kind of foreign investment has a

You don't have an economy which can compete internationally and a lot of people do want to come in here to source for supplies. Ford wanted to come in here, so did General Electric. But you have to lower tariff walls, you have to be efficient in those sectors where you can be internationally competitive. Levers wants to make all their Pears soap here.

Jain: What do you mean by internationally competitive? There are many who want to look at you only as a market, no matter what your tariff wall is. Take 3M for instance. They have been coming to India right from the mid-'50s; they paid many visits. But they said that we will only come if we have the market. So the point should not be pressed that if you lower the tariff barriers then the regime will absolutely take care of the market. It's not such a black and white situation.

Malhotra: The point is that if you have very high protection, then the potential foreign investor would look to that level of protection as a very profitable source of sale in your area.

Thapar: The answer is a combination of policies. First the procedural hitches have to be removed. Then there is no way a foreign investor will export if it is more profitable to sell your goods in India. This is the case with Indian industry as well.

Chauhan: The only condition for foreign investors should be that their exports should be their own manufacturers and not traded items.

Malhotra: There are very large inflows of foreign direct investment in the world today. Many countries are attracting billions of dollars per

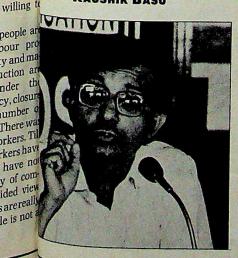
Digitally Wiferen Samai accupidation Chennai and Gangetri point is: these investments come if they are profitable. And do we want these resources or not? I think it is high time Indian industry got rid of the idea that we are the weakest of the weak, that we will not be able to withstand foreign competition, that once these guys come in they will take over India.

> Thapar: Given the restrictions on royalty payments, we often knowingly buy second hand technology.

Malhotra: It's not confined to royalty payments; that is paid in other ways. Personally, I don't think that a total free-for-all as far as foreign investment is concerned is politically feasible. I agree with Chauhan that if you don't want them in colas, don't bring them in. But in a world where technology is so dynamic, there is no dearth of areas where you can do with foreign direct investment. I think you need to select these areas and then say: all right, in these areas, up to such a point, you will be free to come. May be there should be a positive list where foreign investors are welcome. China is doing that.

Basu: If I may strike a slightly dissenting note, on exports and imports I am indeed in favour of complete liberalisation of exchange rates and a movement towards convertibility of the rupee. On direct foreign investment, I think there is a case for some second thoughts. There is indeed scope for getting much more and we should. But to treat it as a panacea can also be wrong. In countries where there is a lot of corruption and a lot of inefficiency, foreign direct investments begin to exploit these tremendously. We have seen that wherever American capital

KAUSHIK BASU



"In some ways, India is a market economy. Not in many countries can you buy driving licences."

"The way parties promise to reduce inflation in 100 days or 200 days smacks of control through decree."

"In countries where there is a lot of corruption and a lot of inefficiency, foreign direct investments begin to exploit these tremendously. We have seen that wherever American capital has gone, American soldiers have soon followed and this has ravaged many Latin American countries."

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JAY DUBASHI

Commission and the Industries Act should

be abolished."

"The benefits of liberalisation are not percolating down, or may be we are in the stage where benefits are not supposed to percolate down."

Digitized by Ary Samai Foundation Chennal and We Seem to be taking for granted that liberalisation is good for the country. Then why are the people up in arms?"

> "We have to take the people, the ordinary man on the street, into confidence about the impact of liberalisation."

as gone, American soldiers have on followed and this has ravaged atin American countries.

Chauhan: If we are going to allow reign exchange to be frittered away a non-essential items and then the schange rate is to be adjusted to eflect that, then the costs of basic ecessities will go up.

Basu: Mr Chauhan, I take that to e typical bureaucratic argument nd wrong for the following reason: it hould not be the opinion of civil rvants or politicians or industrilists as to what are the priorities. You llow the price of foreign exchange to se and then the market will decide as where foreign exchange will be sed, where it won't be used.

Ninan: Can we go through a spefic example? When the Maruti toject started in 1983, it was cheaper r them to import components and me assemblies from Japan than to oduce them here. And your indiinisation and phased manufacturg programme in fact got off to a very cky start. Once the rupee value opped, it became cheaper to proace these items here and so the mpany began to put greater and eater pressure on indigenisation mply because it was cheaper to oduce it here than to import it from Pan. Today you have a situation here Suzuki is vacating the small market because it is cheaper to oduce it here.

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Krishnamurthy: There may be eas in which we may not need direct vestment. I think you can list out all ose things and put it on a negative Then the rest of the industries ould be made open to foreign direct

investment. The thing which hurts one as a professional manager is the general theory that if a multinational comes, it is going to take us for a ride. I don't believe that is so. Our country is big, we have enough expertise in dealing with foreign companies.

Sapru: If Saudi Arabia had not taken the decision to invite foreign investment where would the country be? Why do some countries impose sanctions? As to whether I would welcome Marlboro if it came into the country, I say: why not? They can't take the pants off me.

I believe that not only should we be inviting foreign investment inside India, we should also be allowed to make investments abroad.

Chauhan: I firmly believe that the laws for investing outside India should be the same as those for making investments in India.

Jain: I think I would like to strike a cautionary note, if not a discordant one, because we have assumed that foreign investment is what is now required and what we must do is to create the space for it. But whatever foreign investment comes in still has to go through the Prime Minister's Office or Udyog Bhavan or Yojana Bhavan. We can take Krishnamurthy's certificate that multinationals are okay; I'll buy that. The point is that attracting foreign investment will not be of much help unless we can improve the infrastructure and administrative culture.

Jalan: I feel that in the present kind of regime, even with moderate or minor changes, you would have to have some selectivity in inviting foreign investment simply because your regime today is non-competitive and one which is generating more imports than exports. What today scares off foreign investors is basically the red tapism.

Malhotra: The major constraint I think is not the procedures but the uncertainty. With due apologies to Mr Chauhan, take the Pepsi case. You have one approval, then a new government comes in and says: we'll look at it again. The whole circle begins again. It may happen a third time, so long as Mr Chauhan is busy and effective. My own experience of talking to people who could be investors in India is that they find the biggest hurdle is uncertainty. Besides the rules and procedures, the tax regime also bothers them. They feel they are unwelcome.

Mukherjee: Foreign investment can tackle the balance of payments problem only marginally. But I do agree with Mr Krishnamurthy when he says that perhaps we are underestimating our potential. We want competition and competition not merely among Indian companies or industries. They should be exposed to international competition and for this foreign investments have to be allowed. Much more important is whether we can open the manufacturing sector or the service sector to foreign investment. We can't. We can't upset the applecart within a very short period. Our system won't accept it.

There is a case for more foreign investment but we will have to be selective. You can't simply say that foreign investors will produce only for exports. Nobody will come, because no one's coming to serve India's inter-

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Jalan: Sir, I wanted to suggest mething minimum that any new vernment should do in the area of reign investment. There should be a ositive list of industries where investent would be welcome and so long there is a positive inflow of foreign change, there should be no further rutiny. That is the minimum I feel e should do. Further, in order to olate decisions in this regard from olitical developments, we should ly less on the administration and ore and more on what known as chnical bodies. In today's system, hich we've inherited from the Brith, everything is the responsibility of e administration. If there is a classiation dispute, it goes to the Central pard of Excise and Customs (CBEC) hose members are responsible to the nance Ministry and the ministerere's a whole chain of command. he dispute immediately becomes political". Why can't it be handled y a totally independent technical rectorate as in America? I mean latters relating to foreign investent should not go up to the minister. nd you can also rule out adminis-

ative discretion. Malhotra: Could we talk about the S (NA orld Bank report on liberalisation? Ninan: I think the point about the ONTH port is that the cost of transition ould be very high. The bank is OS I king of a substantial drop in cusns duties which will lead to a heavy ss in government revenue. They are king of making that up by a very eep rise in excise duties and that has own implications. They are talking

est. They are coming to Dibitize of by almaticamal Ehenclapies, Chechrai and eGangot large drop in the production of capital goods industries as part of an adjustment programme.

Would that kind of policy package be politically saleable? Then the World Bank has also recommended that banks should cut their priority sectorlending from 40 percent of total advances to 20 per cent, that banks should be privatised, that interest rates be cut.

Minhas: What is the alternative available to India?

Malhotra: I think that right now it's not possible to cut import tariffs down to 20 per cent, to have real devaluation of 22 per cent or reduce expenditure by 9 per cent or whatever. It is clearly not feasible.

Minhas: What do we do then? I say liberalise, become competitive, make the economy more efficient.

Jalan: Right. You have to find a strategy which in the short run does not raise the import to GDP ratio. You may have to cut demand for petroleum and fertilisers. You have to get foreign financing in the short run. You make some assumption of how much is available and then you have to have a set of policies which gets the export growth rate up from, say, 15 per cent to 23 per cent. That is the only feasible way.

Ninan: I don't think there is even today enough consciousness in the country about how serious the position is, in terms of how much external financing you need. How are you going to tackle it and what is the economic cost involved? I don't think people today are conscious of the seriousness of the situation.

Minhas: You will have to deflate across the board.



#### SHOULD THE PUBLIC **SECTOR BE SOLD OFF?**

Ninan: Swraj Paul once said let's first privatise the Indian private sector.

Jain: The objective situation in the country has undergone a change over 40 years. The state is no longer able to provide the market leadership because its own surpluses don't exist. I think some decisions have to be taken. One is that future investments in the public sector should now be frozen. Then there is the question as to whether certain existing public sector enterprises are serving a public purpose. The public sector means public intervention for a public purpose, but some units have been established all because some ministry or some minister was strong. We said let us set up units to make biscuits or bread or run hotels or even Maruti cars. I think we should clearly state whether these are important. If they don't serve a public purpose, then let the management be done by somebody. The point is that the managerial capacity of the state and its financial resources are under great pressure and should be used with the greatest of economy and only where the public

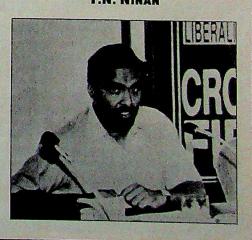
The issue is market ructures, not ownership. he companies that do ell are those that re in a competitive nvironment."

The world is not dying invest in India even if e allow them to. They JAIPUR Vuldn't care less."

"You see licences for liquor, steel, sugar units being issued. Politicians are paid a price for these."

"I think the Indian economy remains the most controlled and least liberalised in the whole world."





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#### TAMIL NADU TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CORPORATION LIMITED

(Tamil Nadu Government Undertaking)

HEAD OFFICE: 99, GREAMS ROAD, OFFICE COMPLEX, MADRAS-600 006 PHONE: 472917 & 476059 GRAMS: TAFCON BRANCH OFFICE: T.T.C. BUS STAND COMPLEX, GANDHIPURAM, COIMBATORE

ACCEPTANCE AND RENEWAL OF FIXED DEPOSITS

PERIODIC INTEREST PAYMENT SCHEME (Scheme - I)

MONEY MULTIPLIER SCHEME (Scheme - II)

Period of Deposit N	finimum Amount Rs.	Rate of Interest	Minimum Amount Rs.	Maturity value Rs.	Maturity value of additional amount of Rs. 1000/-	Yield per annum	
25 months	5000/-	13.5%	3000/-	3966/-	1322/-	15.45%	
36 months	5000/-	14%	3000/-	4545/-	1515/-	17.17%	
48 months	5000/-	14%	3000/-	5220/-	1740/-	18.50%	
60 months	5000/-	14%	3000/-	6000/-	2000/-	20.00%	

Further deposits in multiples of Rs. 1000/- only.

- . The rates of interest/matunty value have been approved by the Government of Tamil Nadu vide G.O. Ms. No. 806, Transport Department, dated 19.7.89
- 2. The maturity value under Moncy Multiplier Scheme have been arrived at based on the compounding of interest once in 2 months at a rate of not exceeding 14% p.a.
- 3. Minimum acceptable amount of deposit is Rs. 5000/- under Scheme-I and Rs. 3000/- under Scheme-II and further in multiples of Rs. 1000/- under both the schemes
- 4. Interest on deposits on Scheme-I will be paid once in two months on fixed due dates (i.e.) 1st April. 1st June, 1st August 1st October, 1st December and 1st February OR 1st May,
- 1st July, 1st September, 1st November, 1st January and 1st March re that the first instalment of interest on every deposit is paid within 2 months from the date of the deposit.
- 5. Premature withdrawal of deposit is also allowed in exceptional cases at the discretion of the Corporation subject to RBI rules issued from time to time
- 6. Fixed Deposit Rules provide for nomination.
- 7. The acceptance of Fixed Deposits will be subject to the terms and conditions indicated in the statement accompanying the application form.
- 8. Interest paid under both the schemes will be subject to deducation of income-tax at source, in accordance with the
- income-tax rules at the appropriate rate
- 9. The Reserve Bank of India has granted general permission to accept deposits on non-repatriation basis from nonresidents of Indian nationality/origin and overseas corporate bodies predominantly owned by such persons
- 10. The bankers for dealing in Non-resident Indian deposits are Canara Bank. Thousandlights Branch, Madras-600 006 South India.
- 11. Particulars specified as per Non-Banking Financial Companies (Reserve Bank) Directions 1977 and Non-Banking Financial Companies and Miscellaneous Non-Banking Companies (Advertisement) Rule 1977 are as under

- a. Name of the Company: TAMIL NADU TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CORPORATION LIMITED 25th March 1975
- b. Date of incorporation of the company of the company Business carried on by the Company
  - To finance mainly Hire Purchase requirements of buses, lornes, etc. of the Transport Undertakings shuated or operating within the state of Tamil Nadu
- d. Brief particulars of the management of the Company The Company is managed by Board of Directors consisting of Directors nominated by Government of Tamil Nadu
- e. Names, addresses and occupation of the Directors

NAME	OCCUPATION	ADDRESS		
Thiru A.M. Sundararaj, IAS Chairman	Chairman, Thiruvalluvar Transport Corpn, Limited	No. 33 McNicholas Road, Il Lane, Chetpet, Madras-600 031.		
Thiru R. Santhanam, IAS - Director	Secretary to Govt. of Tamil Nadu Transport Department	13, 8th Cross Street, Shastri Nagar, Adyar, Madras-600 020		
Thiru M.A. Gowrishankar, IAS Director		No. 14, Il Main Road, Gandhi Nagar, Adyar, Madras-600 020,		
Thiru P.S. Pandiyan, IAS Director	Chairman & Managing Director, Tamil Nadu Industrial Investment Corpn. Ltd.	AA43, III Main Road, Anna Nagar, Madras-600 040.		
Thiru K. Subramanian, BE Director	Managing Director, Thiruvalluvar Transport Corpn. Limited	P.No. 2717, 7th Street, Y Block, 12th Main Road Anna Nagar West, Madras-600 040		
Thiru R. Rathinasabapathy BE, MBA, FIE.	Director, Institute of Road Transport	T.S. No. 42/2, Katairnagal Nagar (W), Ekkattuthangal,		
Director		Madras-600 097.		
Thiru M. Jeyaraj, BE, M.Sc., (Engg) FIE.	Director, Motor Vehicles	AL 105, 3rd Street, 11th Main Road.		
Director	Maintanance Organisation	Anna Nagar, Madras-600 040.		
Dr. R. Ganesan, Ph.D.	Managing Director.	Diet No. 240 17th F. C.		
Director	Pallavan Transport Consultancy Services Ltd.	Plot No. 269, 17th East Street, Kamaraj Nagar, Thruvanmiyur, Madras-600 041.		
Thiru R.K. Sharma, IAS	Joint Secretary to			
Managing Director	Government of	No. 8, Krishna Apartments 2A, Warren Road,		
	Tamil Nadu	Mylapore,		
	Transport Department	Madras-600 004		

 Profit of the Company before and after making provisions for tax for the three financial years immediately preceeding the date of advertisement. (Rs. in lakhs)

	Profit Before tax	Profit after tax
1987-88	11.20	5.32
1988-89	10.98	5.21
1989-90	17.95	10.75

Dividends declared by the Company in respect of the said years.

Summarised financial position of the Company as appearing in the latest audited Balance Sheet:

					Rs. in lakhs
LIABILITIES	As at 31 1990	st March 1989	ASSETS	As at 31 1990	si March 1989
Share Capital Share Deposit Reserves and Surplus Secured Loans Unsecured Loans Current Liabilities and Provisions Total	581.00 97,37 802.00 14662.54 1790.91 17933.82	556.00 25.00 86.62 934.80 12475.37 1882.39 15960.18	Fixed Assets Investments Current Assets Loans and Advances	9.74 5.00 1142.06 16777.02	4.10 5.01 1025.78 14925.29

- The Company can rate deposits under Reserve Bank of India directions upto a maximum of Rs. 67.84 crores based on capital structure on \$11,3.90. The aggregate of the deposit held on the is they of the year immediately proceeding the financial year for the above purpose is Rs. 49.16 crores. R. DECLARED
- that the Company has complied with the provision of the Directions of the Reserve Bank of India applicable to it.
- ii. that the compliance with the Directions does not imply that the repayment of deposits is guaranteed by the Reserve Bank of India, and
- that the deposits accepted/renewed by the Company are unsecured and rank pari pass with other unsecured liabilities.
- i. The advertisement is issued on the authority and in the name of the Board of Directors of the Company, the text of which was approved by the Board on 27.9.90 and a copy of it has been filed with the Regional Office of the Department of Financial Companies. Reserve Bank of India. Bargators.

(On behalf of and as authorsed by the Board of Directors) For Tamil Nadu Transport Development Finance Corpn. Ltd. R.K. Sharma Managing Director

- \* TAMIL NADU TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CORPORATION LIMITED (TDFC) is a fully owned Government Company.
- \* RESERVE BANK OF INDIA has permitted TDFC to accept NRI deposits on non-repatriation basis.
- \* Loans are advanced on deposit.
- $\star$  No bad debt or write-off in the last 15 years.
- \* TDFC has been making profits since inception
- $\star$  The only organisation of its kind in the whole of India.

TOTAL DEPOSIT NOW RS. 177 CRORES

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served. The Governent's first business is to protect life nd property. In any case it's not ing able to do that job. Therefore, ss government in the economic here is for the good of the country.

Krishnamurthy: I have been assoated with two successful enterrises, Maruti and BHEL. Still, I believe at the public sector's returns are ot commensurate with the investents made. There is simply no countability.

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My suggestion is that the public iterprises should be divided into ree categories. The first includes iterprises in businesses where the overnment should not be inte tourism, bread, cycles and ooters. I think these units should put on notice and eventually ivatised. The next category inudes enterprises which are comting with private units, such as MT (Hindustan Machine Tools). EL, and Maruti. In these cases, I ink the Government should ing down its equity gradually ver time below 50 per cent. The ird category is the core sector nd infrastructure units-in inistries like petroleum and coal here natural resources are exoited. In these areas, public ownship can continue, but even here juity can be diluted. But the overnment must concentrate its forts on running these establishents well.

I see that the public sector no nger holds the kind of appeal it d to political leaders some time ick. But privatisation can't be ne overnight. There are some actical difficulties. First of all, we ll have to come to terms with the ade unions. The whole process of ivatisation will come to a stop if e trade unions are not willing to operate. That's what happened Scooters India.

Malhotra: I personally think at there are adequate resources the Indian market to undertake programme of sale of public ctor equity. There were fears at money won't be available—I self used to subscribe to this w.butnotanylonger.SoIdon't shortage of resources as a ijor problem hampering privatition, provided some sensible asing is done.

As far as the profitability of the blic sector is concerned, if you

are essentially a function of what kind of price you've fixed, the overall performance has been dismal. And when you look at state government enterprises, the picture is horrendous, particularly the performance of road transport corporations. I see no reason why road transport corporations should be in the public sector. I know of one state where in one year as many as 13 corporations were created because the chief minister could not accommodate political hopefuls into his cabinet. It is high time that we sort of had an ordinance of self-denial in the public sector.

The other point which we have to

#### V. KRISHNAMURTHY



"Privatisation can't be done overnight. There are some practical difficulties. First of all, we will have to come to terms with the trade unions."

"We should not make distinctions between the public and private sectors. We should only talk of efficient and inefficient sectors."

"Eventually, we have to reach a situation leading to the de-nationalisation of the banking sector and the free floating of the rupee."

purpose is clearly being Digitized by Arya Samai Foundation Chennal and eGangotri consider sooner or later is the financial sector. To my mind, if you have nationalised the financial sectorwhether it is banks, insurance or other financial services-and then you control it through a ministry or some other government institution, you are controlling the sources of money and you are not really liberalising the economy. Then there is the question of autonomy of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). I personally think that so long as you have a situation where the central bank of the country has no control worth the name over monetary liquidity, that means that the Government by tradition or by right claims that at any point of time.

it will have 3 per cent or 4 per cent of the GDP by way of goodies from the central bank without any questions being asked. Then you cannot have a reasonable monetary policy. Today we have a situation where the Government not only borrows directly from the RBI, its other borrowings are also at fixed rates of interest. This is why you have a situation where-despite the tremendous growth in the country's financial markets. especially in the last decade—the bond market is just not developed. You can't have a strong modern financial system without having a strong bond market. As for bringing in private capital into the banks, may be you can start with 20 or 25 per cent of the equity base and later on increase it. But you can't have a situation where say 55 or 60 per cent of the resources of banks are pre-empted. Then what kind of liberalisation are we talking about?

Basu: It is not the publicness of the public sector which is at fault. I want to stress the point that in countries like South Korea and Taiwan the public sector is indeed doing very well. So it's the general political and organisational ethos in which the public sector functions which is largely responsible for inefficiency in the public sector. Now in India, the public sector, barring indeed some exceptions, has done badly: What do we do? One view-which is picking up a lot of followers and I think it is really a dangerous misconception-is that you should simply sell out. But selling a public sector enterprise may merely mean a change of portfolio for the Government; it's like a family which sells

"Unfortunately, people have gone to the and ed extent of justifying the need for foreign collaboration for scooter seats and rear-view mirrors. Bajaj has been making them for years."

"I feel the only legitimate reason for having foreign investment in the country should be technology."

"The laws for investing outside India should be the same as those for making investments in India."



RAMESH CHAUHAN

its jewellery to buy something else. If the Government sells a part of the public sector and then uses that money, say, to build houses for civil servants, it simply means a change in the Government's portfolio. That is not the way we should think of curing the public sector's problems. The right measure is to let in the private sector. Airlines are a very good example. You should simply let in the private sector and allow them to compete with the Governmentowned airlines.

Malhotra: I agree that portfolio changes would not help. If your current policies do not encourage growth in productivity or efficiency, even with a portfolio change you will not get every far.

Jalan: The point is about competition. I think all the research done on public enterprises shows that if you have to have a monopoly, then a public monopoly is probably better than a private monopoly.

Sapru: I look at myself (ITC) as a public sector company because 38 per cent of my company is owned by the public sector.

Malhotra: So that way there is no private sector.

Sapru: What I am trying to point out is the difference between my functioning and the way a public sector chief executive functions. There are some fundamental differences: in my case there is a board which controls the activities of the managing director. And I meet my shareholders once a year. If I don't perform, the shareholders have the right to throw me out. The problem in the public sector is that the shareholder is meeting the managing director every day. The managing director is reduced to a non-entity. As to why a public sector company goes sick, I don't think everything is the fault of the manager. The fault also lies with the policy maker.

Minhas: The problem with the managements of public sector enterprises is that they are not accountable. Now this happens also in private companies where primary entreprenuership gets substituted by professional managers. But they do get to the point of reckoning. The value of their shares goes down. But in the case of the public sector, this sort of thing never happens. The day of reckoning never comes.

Sapru: Nobody may be willing to volunteer to run public sector units which are incurring large losses. Is it feasible that the workers of such units be made shareholders?

Ninan: Once again we are approaching the whole issue of privatisation from the point of view of a soft which is looking soft options. I don't think the Government is thinking of privatisation because of any ideological conviction. It's doing so because it has no choice. A lot of the public sector is sick because it has taken over sick units which were in the private sector. But when you talk of privatising banks, it must be remembered that it's the private banks that are going sick even today and the RBI has moved in to merge them and do all kinds of things to keep them from going under. You have several cases where the private sector has failed. The critical issue is market structures, not ownership. By and large, the companies that do well are the companies that are in a competitive environment, for instance Maruti Udyog, Indian Petrochemicals Limited and HMT. Public sector companies do badly once they have a monopoly, because there is no market pressure on them. So unless you change market structures, by converting a public monopoly into a private monopoly nothing is ever-in achieved.

The other point is that the Central Government is trailing behind state governments as far as privatisation is concerned. Bihar is talking of privatising 15 sugar mills, Andhra Pradesh has already sold Allwyn Nissan to the Mahindras, Tamil Nadu is bringing in private partners in all kinds of companies, Gujarat is thinking of privatising two ports and Rajasthan is privatising bauxite mining. And this is happening because the states are all bankrupt. But sometimes this is being done for the wrong reasons. Uttar Pradesh is selling a cement unit because it was losing money at a time when the whole cement industry is making money.

The other question is: how do you privatise? Through an underground deal where you don't know what's going on? Do you sell to one large private group and change management automatically? Do you sell to a large body of shareholders and then say a professional management is answerable to the widely-dispersed body of shareholders? Do you go for public bidding or not? How do you price these shares? Do you just sell your profitable units or do you sell the loss-making units after turning them around, which is what the British experience is?

Minhas: You do a bit of all of this.

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2	Ashraya UG (Four Storeyed)	1150	5400	GF. 262,000/- FF.8SF. 223,000/- IF. 2,36,000/-	26.220/- 27.320/- 23.620/-	Drawing room, Lobby, one bed room, kitchen, one toilet attached, WC attached with lobby
3	Anukampa MG (Four Storeyed)	896	81.00	GF. 3.35,000/- FF&SF. 3.20,000/- TF. 3.25,000/-	33.520/- 32.020/- 32.520/-	Drawing cum Dining room, Two bed room, alloched loiel, WC kilchen, court yord & balcory, G.F. One Drawing/Dining, Two bedroom, Two toilets,
4	Aakansha(1) Mini MiG (Four Storeyed)	576	79.30	GF 4 10:000/- FF &SF. 3:25:000/- IF 3:35:000/-	41,020/- } 32,520/- ] 33,520/- ]	verandha, Kitchen & Two Sit Out.
,	Ackansha (2) MIG (Four Storeyed)	808	GF 111.00 FF 101.00 S.F. 90.00 I.F. 90.00	GF. 5.00.000/- FF. 4.25.000/- SF. 4.00.000/- TF. 4.10.000/-	50.020/- 42.520/- 40.020/- 41,020/-	G.F. one Drawing cum Dining. Two bedroom, Kilchen, 2 tofel verandha, Two Strout & garage F.F. one Drawing Journ-Dining. Kilchen, Two bed room Two foilel verandha. 2 sit out & Lounge. S.F./T.F. one Drawing cum Dining. Two bed room. Kilchen, Two toilet, verandha. 2 sit out & Jerroce.

R.B. Maurya Secretary

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P.N. Misra Vice Chairman

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# The Kurdish Dilemma



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AS an early and constant supporter of President George Bush's Gulf policy, I feel it appropriate to uneasiness about the course of

events in northern Iraq. No one can view the heart-rending scenes of suffering along the frontiers of Turkey and Iran without welcoming any move that promises to avert disaster among the Kurdish refugees. But equally, President Bush's initial instinct, which was to avoid military involvement, accurately reflected long-term realities of an inaccessible part of the world where the vital interests of every re-

gional power intersect and in which the US's national security is not being directly threatened. To complicate matters further, having assumed the responsibilities inherent in committing its military forces, the US must take care that the reported plan of turning the refugee camps over to the lightly-armed UN contingents does not repeat the whole tragic process as soon as Iraq regains some of its strength.

The beginning of wisdom is to recognise that to alleviate the Kurdish tragedy, America does not need to assert either the duty or the capacity to right every injustice by force of arms. Northern Iraq is a special case because the violations of human rights occurred underour very eyes, during a cease-fire whose terms we had dictated, by a dictator we had compared to Hitler, and caused by troops it had been in our power to destroy. But defining a special responsibility makes it more, not less, important to relate our actions to some concept of the national interest.

The Kurdish people are victims of a history going back for centuries.

Saladin, the victor against the Crusaders, was a Kurd who led his armies when Islam was the unifying force. Since the advent of the nation state, however, the Kurdish people-some 20 million-have found themselves divided among Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey and the Soviet Union. Their understandable national demands, therefore, threaten the vital interest of five nations in an area to which the US has geographical access only through one of the countries harbouring Kurdish minorities-in the past Iran, now Turkey.

Many of the same people who were not prepared to use force to end Iraqi terror in Kuwait are now arguing that

the US should have continued the war to assist the Kurds. I do not recall any such arguments when the cease-fire was declared. Right up to the very end, the highest officials of our government had assured Congress and the international community that our sole objective was to evict Iraq from Kuwait. With that objective exceeded, the President could not have rallied domestic or international support for continuing the war.

But even assuming that the scale of our success made the Administration impervious to criticism, a prudent consideration of the national interest could have led to the conclusion to end the war. For if it was hegemony over

the Gulf by any radical nation that threatened America's vital interests-the principal reason for our intervention-we had nearly as much to fear from Iran as from Irag. especially in view of the large Shiite population in Kuwait and along the Saudi border. Moreover, continuing the war would not necessarily have helped the Kurds; their revolt was put down by forces kept in the north throughout the conflict.

The Administration gambled that the returning Iraqi prisoners of war would help overthrow Saddam and that the ethnic issue would then be solved by the new government. This judgement was not unreasonable, but too much driven by thinking. should have been understood that a balance of power in the Gulf sustainable only by Saddam in power would prove politically and morally unacceptable. Therefore, as soon as it became apparent that widespread revolts were under way, a permanent cease-fire should have been made dependent on Saddam's removal or, if that was thought unachievable, on



The beginning of wisdom is to recognise that to alleviate the Kurdish tragedy. America does not need to assert either the duty or the capacity to right every injustice by force of arms.

severe restrictions on the movements Arygeneration of Palestinians; the pur-of the Iraqi armed forces. Palestinians; the pur-pose of the allied military deployment ern Iraq is internationally guaranteed.

Keeping Iraq whole to avoid a power vacuum was a valid objective frequently affirmed before and during the war. But the resulting disinclination to become involved in Iraq's internal affairs proved incompatible with the scale of Iraq's defeat and was in fact believed by UN Resolution 687 establishing the cease-fire. For its disarmament provisions can be enforced only by intrusive international supervision. And the rapid withdrawal of American forces progressively eliminated the credibility of a threat to re-intervene.

Raking over the past is no guide to the future, for which the following in northern Iraq should be to enable the refugees to return to their homes.

The plan to introduce UN police forces is dangerous. The authority for this is derived from a previous invitation of Iraq for assistance to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). There is no precedent for interpreting an invitation to the UNHCR in this manner. No new formal authority will be asked as the Soviet Union and China would almost certainly veto it. But the very attributes that make this procedure attractive-obscuring incompatible objectives-doom it politically. China and the Soviet Union

ern Iraq is internationally guaranteed autonomy for the Kurds.

Saddam and the Kurdish negotiators have announced an agreement establishing Kurdish autonomy based on a 1970 accord. Since Saddam flouted the original agreement, it would be reckless to rely on his unsupported word. Any agreement would work best if Saddam were removed. But frequent exhortations to the effect without a plausible programme for accomplishing it threaten to build up Saddam's stature and lower our credibility.

We can, however, maintain sanctions until the objective of Kurdish autonomy is achieved. At an earlier



The Kurdish demands threaten the vital interest of five nations in an area to which the US has had accessthrough Iran in the past and now Turkey.

principles seem to be central:

► The western military involvement cannot be open-ended. If western forces remain as permanent protectors of permanent refugee camps, they will rapidly become politically isolated. As Iraq regains its strength, it is bound to begin harassing the allied military forces. And the Kurds are certain to resist statements to prevent the camps from being used for guerrilla warfare, thus placing allied forces between two fires. Today, Iran and Turkey welcome measures that remove Kurdish refugees from their borders: tomorrow they may well resist the probable consequences of permanent camps protected by western military forces. This would saddle the western democracies with the same dilemmas that drove them out of Beirut.

Refugees must not be settled in permanent camps. We must not spawn in the remote mountains of northern Iraq the kind of refugee camps that have blighted the lives of a

understandably wish to avoid a precedent for UN intervention in what they consider domestic affairs, and they see this procedure as a face-saving device to replace allied forces with a UN presence easily disposed of later. The western allies are eager to extricate their troops. If the UN does not ratify an autonomy agreement between Iraq and the Kurds, and if Iraq does not agree formally to UN supervision, the procedure envisioned will leave the inany-case inadequate police forces and the Kurds at the mercy of Iraq as soon as it regains some manoeuvring room after the sanctions are lifted.

► The Allies must now insist on a Kurdish-Iraqi agreement based on international guarantees. Saddam's strategy is clear: to make an agreement now that will speed the removal of foreign troops from Iraqi soil and pave the way for an end of sanctions. He can then rebuild Iraq's economy and deal with the Kurds when the world's attention is focused elsewhere. This is why

stage of the Gulf crisis, I questioned sole reliance on sanctions because I believed that the buildup in Saudi Arabia could not be sustained for the necessary length of time, nor that sanctions alone could reduce Iraq's military capacity. But the war has ravaged Iraq's economy and military capacity. Sanctions are, therefore, much more likely to work now than before hostilities.

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The world now emerging cries out for American leadership in many areas. But if we do not want to turn into either philanthropists or permanent policemen, we must establish priorities relating ends to means, and to sorting out our permanent post-Cold War interests. Above all, we need to define objectives of possible military interventions with care, heeding the words of the 19th century statesman who said: "Woe to the leader whose arguments at the end of a war are not convincing as they were at the beginning.

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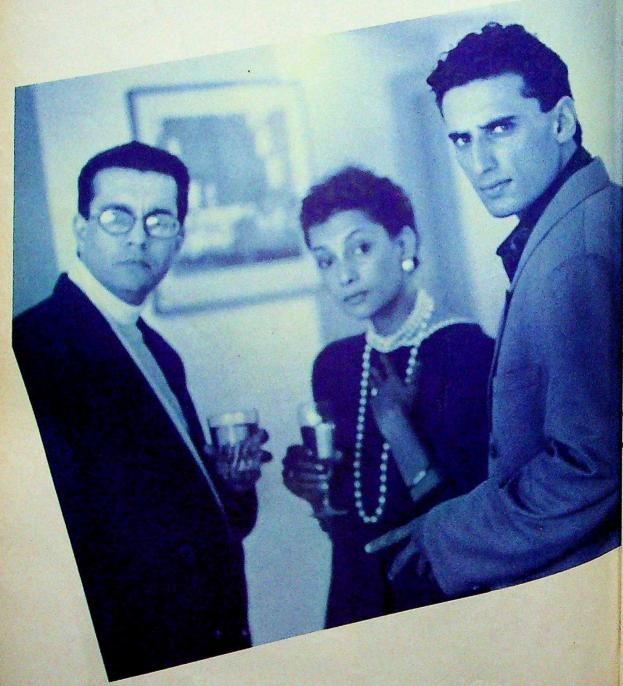
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guests

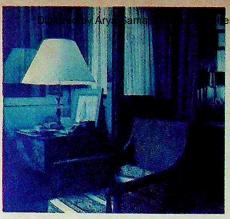
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here was chaos among guests almost immediately.

The music was replaced by sed voices; the bright lights by matchsticks; and the breeze n my classic Usha fans by plets of perspiration.

"What happened?" I asked butler, "Young lady bumped o me sir. She screamed, and dropped the tray of drinks on the music system. I think the e has blown. I also think the ing lady has fainted sir."

Armed with this knowledge egan directing rescue operations.

lights were relit; the music

was replayed; and, most important, the Usha breeze restored.

The young lady was deposited

in the guest bedroom.

I personally opened the windows, and watched the Usha fan's blades quiver to life and circulate air through the room.

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The young lady's eyes fluttered open, and then met

mine. "I've been wanting to spend a minute alone with you all evening", she murmured, "I couldn't think of a better way."



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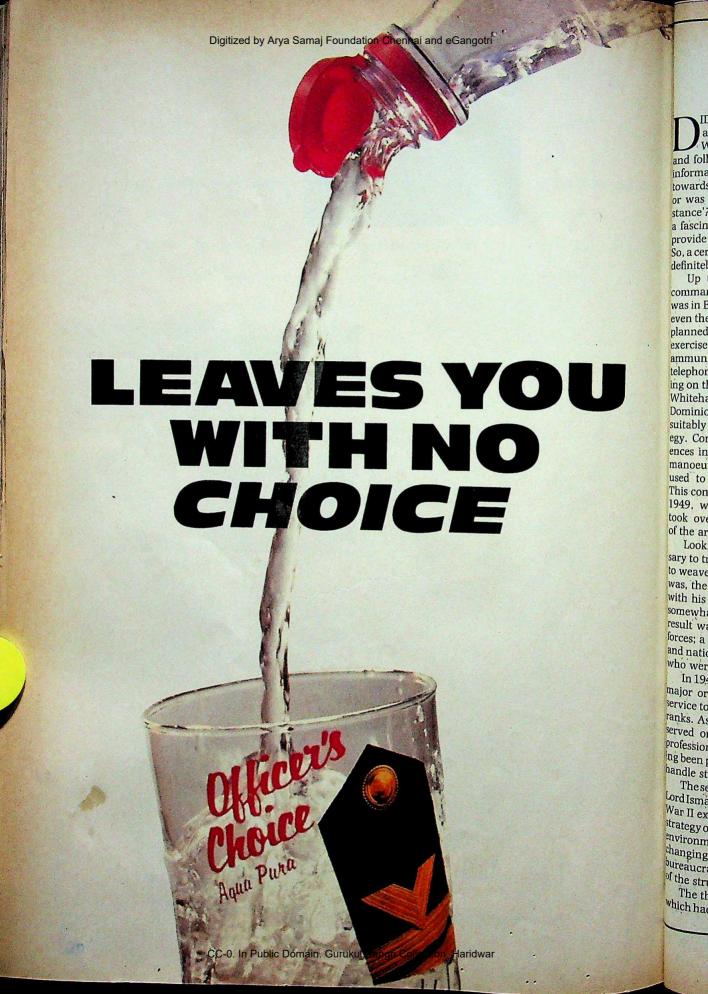


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# **Security Strategy Models**

ID post-Independence India have a national security strategy? Was it consciously articulated and followed; or was it evolved more informally, in an unstructured way but towards a recognised and desired end: or was it evolved purely by 'happenstance'? I believe that apart from being a fascinating question in itself, it can provide useful insights for the future. So, a certain amount of introspection is definitely in order.

Up to 1949, the military higher command, both in India and Pakistan. was in British hands. Not so strangely, even the Kashmir war of 1947-48, was planned and fought like a 'two-sided exercise with troops' but with live ammunition; the two Cs-in-C being in telephonic contact! The strategic thinking on the other hand was wrought in Whitehall, with the roles for the two Dominion armed forces, being designed suitably to support the Imperial Strategy. Commonwealth military conferences in London along with autumn manoeuvres on the Salisbury Plain used to be the events of the year. This continued even after January 15, 1949, when Field Marshal Cariappa took over as the first Indian C-in-C of the army.

Looking back to the '50s, it is necessary to trace the vital skeins that went

to weave the tapestry of national security policy. The first was, the political leadership exemplified by Pandit Nehru with his strong streak of idealism and pacifism, leavened somewhat by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's pragmatism. The result was a reluctant acceptance of the need for armed forces; a built-in suspicion of the professional, intellectual and nationalistic credentials of most of the 'Brown Sahibs' who were the senior Indian Army officers.

In 1947-48, these had mostly jumped from a very senior major or lieutenant-colonel with about 20-odd years of service to generals who had skimmed over the intervening ranks. As a matter of British policy most of them had not served on the operational staff. This undermined their professional comprehension and their self-confidence. Havng been pitch-forked into higher command, they could not

handle strategic planning well.

The second skein was the structure that was designed by Lord Ismay for managing defence. It was based on the World War II experience and did not anticipate the advent of the itrategy of deterrence or of coercive diplomacy in a Cold War environment. The Ismay structure was overcome by the thanging security environment. Political, military and oureaucratic inexperience precluded effective modification of the structure.

The third skein was the erstwhile Indian Civil Service, which had many strengths, but one weakness. Unlike in the



The Indian strategy is in keeping with the aim of continuing to increase military capability in step with economic growth. No reference is thought necessary to Pakistan's fears or reactions.

army, the senior civilians were not deliberately kept out of the higher echelons of policy making undertaken in India. A fair number of civilians had reached senior ranks, with adequate experience at each level. These were the pluses. The British however, kept the department of defence in India confined to very mundane activities like canton, ments and accounts. That was the weakness. Yet at Independence, the civil servant's credibility was higher than the serviceman's.

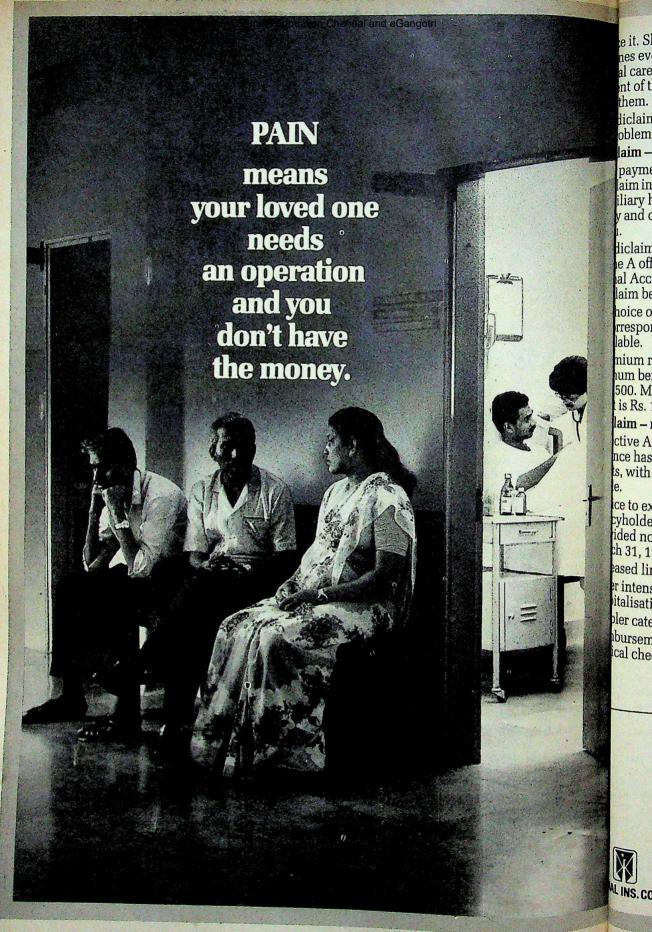
A<sup>T</sup> that point of time, what would have been the strategic options in dealing with Pakistan? (I am keeping China out of the equation to keep it simple). The first is a competitive model; the "Bull and the Bull Frog" model. India being the bull emaciated through colonialism; with much potential, but very cussed and unable to get its act together. Nevertheless a bull. A Pakistan with comparatively much less potential, but large enough in absolute terms to aspire to be a regional power. Fired by an understandably fierce need to establish its identity and somehow attain a status equal to India. At least in terms of military power. This model casts Pakistan as the bull frog.

The Indian strategy in this model would be to continue to increase

military capability in step with economic growth. No reference is thought necessary to Pakistan's fears or reactions. If Pakistan reacts by inviting outside military aid, okay. The bull frog may blow itself larger and larger with free air, goes the argument, it would either have to come to terms with its size or burst! What the model does not take into account is a bull that is determined to thwart and slow its own growth.

The second model, would have been a cooperative one, the "Bull and the Billy Goat" model. In this model, Pakistan is cast as the belligerent and tough billy goat. It would have been persuaded that it may not be a bull, but was a very tough and strong animal all the same. Also, that it was in the mutual interest to cooperate, so that the wolves from outside the region could not get at us. That as partners, we must look after the concerns of our smaller neighbours. This kind of strategy would have called for adjustments on issues like Hyderabad, Junagadh and Kashmir. It is not surprising that neither country had the sophistication or finesse to be able to adopt this strategy, in the traumatic aftermath of Partition.

The first model may not have been consciously chosen, but was perhaps stumbled into. All the same, as we get off the time machine and into the present, can't we ask ourselves: "Even if circumstances precluded certain attitudes in 1947, can we not think of them now?"



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Description	Categories					
Secuription	I	П	III	IV	V	VI
BENEFITS PER PERSON						
I Hospitalisation benefits:						
i. Per day not exceeding:						
a) Room, board, nursing.	750	550	350	250	150	100
b) Intensive care,						
board, nursing.	1500	1100	700	500	300	200
Aggregate limit for						
(a) & (b).	33000	24000	15500	11000	6600	4500
ii. Surgeon, anaesthetist, medical						
practitioner, consultant, specialist.	22000	10000	2222			
Anaesthesia, blood, OT,	22000	13200	9200	7000	3000	2600
medicines, drugs,						
radiotherapy, etc.	28000	16800	12800	9000	5000	2400
II Domiciliary Hospitalisation:	20000	10000	12000	9000	5000	3400
(Non-surgical treatment only)			(PE) 22-74			
Medical practitioners,						
consultants, specialists.	6000	3500	2500	1600	1400	1400
Blood, oxygen, diagnostic					- 100	1100
material, nurses & related						
expenses.	7500	4500	3000	2000	1700	1700
II Personal Accident:						
Death or permanent						
disablement.	150000	100000	75000			
ANNUAL PREMIUM PAYABLE						
SCHEME A						
Mediclaim and Personal Accident Insurance	4500	0.55				
SCHEME B	1500	950	700			
Mediclaim	4000	0.50				
noutotailli	1300	840	600	350	250	200

Note: 1. The table above is only indicative. For full details, see Mediclaim policy.

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#### A daughter's trail-blazing efforts for justice

T'S a daughter demanding maintenance this time and she is as Ldoughty as the eponymous Shah Bano, She is Munira Gandhi, a 20vear-old girl of the Dawoodi Bohra community, who is fighting a trailblazing legal battle to get maintenance from her father, Aziz Saijuddin Gandhi, who runs a small grocery shop in Dohad, Gujarat.

It was in 1988 that Munira stopped receiving her part of the alimony of Rs 200 a month that she and her mother, Fatima, were getting from Aziz ever since he divorced Fatima in 1972. The two were granted alimony by the local civil court under Section 125 of the Cr.P.C. which, however; restricts the claim of a girl of any community to her reaching 18 years of age. Munira became a major in 1988.

Though the mother and daughter were getting a puny Rs 200 a month from Aziz, every penny was welcome. They have been dependent on Fatima's brother, a petty jaggery trader, who has his own family to support. Despite putting in labour for him, they regard

themselves as a burden. Fatima would often be in tears seeing only a future of drudgery for Munira. Yet, they put up a brave front when Munira stopped getting money from Aziz.

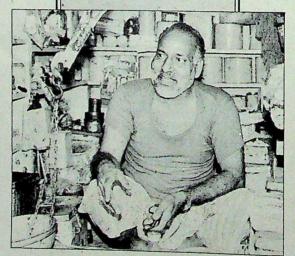
What launched Munira in her new role as a wounded tigress was a horrendous encounter last year with her father. Forlorn, after a tiff with her mother, she had gone to Aziz's doorstep to seek succour in paternal arms. It was night when she reached his house which he shares with his fourth wife (Fatima was the second). To her shock he started belting her before he drove her out.

Furious and wanting to teach him a lesson, Munira decided to go to court. A young lawyer Kalpesh D. Parikh came to her rescue. "It was a call of conscience," he says. He filed an application on Munira's behalf in the local civil court under Section 370 of the Muslim Personal Law, which says: "A father is bound to maintain his

unmarried daughter till her marriage." At the rate of Rs 500 per month, Munira demanded Rs 8,000 as arrears from the date Aziz stopped paying her. Aziz repudiated his liability arguing that Munira and her mother were earning persons and did not need maintenance. He pleaded that he was poor.

Parikh, who is arguing Munira's case free, next filed an application for interim re-

> Munira made legal history when she got her father to pay her interim relief pending decision in the maintenance case.



Munira Gandhi (top); and Aziz: family feud

lief under Section 151 of the Civil Procedure Code. Resisting it again, Aziz argued that until Munira proved herself to be an indigent person, she wasn't liable to get interim relief. Besides, he also pleaded that neither the Muslim Personal Law nor the civil code permits recourse to Section 151.



The court, however, set aside Aziz's arguments. Judge H.K. Shah, quoting R BHAIRAY: S a Supreme Court ruling, held that there was no evidence of Fatima and Munira earning money and ordered Aziz to pay an interim relief of Rs 130 per month to Munira till the case was

disposed of.

Aziz is predictably sore over the verdict. "I don'tearn whom: Padr enough and I'll be paying the KHANI TODI: maintenance through my nose." he says. When asked why he married four times it he was not doing well, Aziz is non-plussed: "I've had a very unpleasant family life-full of quarrels. So I have been in search of a happy married life." Fatima and Munira ICE break down while narrating their harrowing experiences with Aziz. Says Munira: call him a zalim (tyrant). Fatima has painful memories too. Recalls she: "He would not even give me money to Bombay, C buy milk for Munira when must be M she was young and instead

would ask me to feed her water. And I Registered was made to sleep on the floor.

Munira, whose innocent looks be- weeks for c tray her steely nerves, wants to inflict a For gift ins crushing defeat on her father in the order form case and seems determined to go down in legal history as another Shah Bano. —UDAY MAHURKAR I the order

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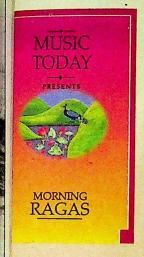
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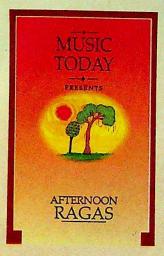
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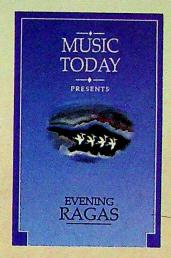
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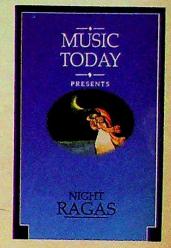
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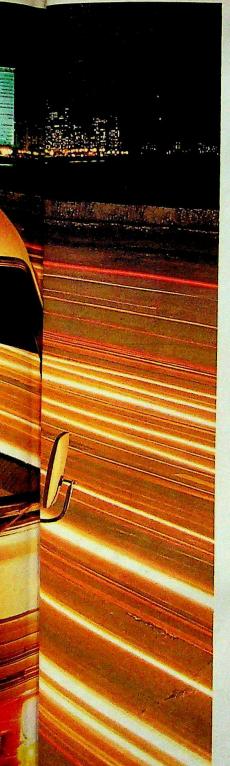
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### A lucid account of Kashmir's tortuous history

KASHMIR: BEHIND THE VALE

y M.J. AKBAR iking Penguin India ages: 240; Price: Rs 250



IN essence the Kashmir story is an extremely simple one. But over the years it has been doctored, distorted, misinterpreted. misrepresented and even perverted wilfully and

horoughly. No wonder that to the uninitiated the issue has become complex and confusing while the interested parties are hell-bent on making it ontentious. To disentangle fact from iction, truth from falsehood is by no neans an easy task. Only Krishna Menon had the wit to be able to do so, in speech to the United Nations Security Council lasting no more than nine ours. But that was 34 years ago. Since hen much water—and, alas, blood has flowed down the Jhelum, to say othing of sundry other rivers.

It is to M.J. Akbar's credit that he

ias managed to delineate he salient features of the (ashmir issue not only nethod as orthrightly but also with condom. emarkable fluency and ommendable brevity. He tarts his book, appropriitely but perhaps at too ace their reat a length, with nfidence lashmir's history dating r natural ack four centuries which without ade this part of the subou share. Ontinent an oasis of santex and y and secularism even in make ithe midst of the monuple who lental communal madvacy and ess at the time of Inde-endence and Partition. ubsequent events. (ohinoor hich many of us have ved through, thus fall eatly into place and have een adequately dealt ith. These include inevably, the India-Pakistan onflict not only on the attlefield and in the conproduct rence halls of the UN or

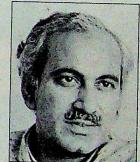
across the negotiating table at Tashkent and Shimla but also on the higher plane of principle.

At a time when an enormous miasma of misinformation has been built around the demand for a plebiscite. Akbar deserves to be congratulated on having hammered home the point that the Kashmir question might never have arisen at all if Pakistan and its supreme leader, Jinnah, had not rejected from the word go the insistent Indian proposal that the will of the Kashmiri people, not of its Maharaja, be allowed to prevail.

Akbar is equally unsparing in recounting what can only be called a tragic tale of endless bungling by politi-

cians in both New Delhi and Srinagar in adjusting the delicate relationship between the Centre and the sensitive state and indeed in dealing with

Akbar (right); Sheikh Abdullah with Nehru: probing complex equations





In doing so, he takes a swipe at Sardar Patel's "astonishing indifference" to Kashmir whether before August 15, 1947, or afterwards, and at Shyama Prasad Mookherjee, the forebear of today's BJP, for having first voted for Article 370 and two years later made its repeal a major issue in the first general elections. On neither count can the author be faulted. Especially because he has been evenhanded in as much as he has been critical also of Jawaharlal Nehru's errors. This makes all the more conspicuous Akbar's indulgence to Sheikh Abdullah's transgressions. "Flirtation with a chimera called independence'

later detained. Twenty-two years later Indira Gandhi had the good sense to have an accord with Abdullah and bring him

is too mild a description for Abdullah's

contribution to the watershed crisis of

1953 when he had to be deposed and

back to power in Kashmir. But once again all the malign elements on both sides became active and all the earlier follies in history began to repeat themselves in a grotesque combination of tragedy and farce.

In apportioning blame for the disastrous dismissal of Farooq in 1984. Akbar has been fair to both Nehru's daughter and Abdullah's son. As readers of Akbar's earlier books and newspaper columns know, he writes superbly. But must he spoil the effect by being, at times, a trifle too polemical, too romantic or too partisan? His criticism of the V.P. Singh government's "surrender" to the kidnappers of the then Union home minister's daughter would have been all the more effective were it more restrained.

Finally, it is a mystery why he has left the story dangling at this precise point. Surely the fire in the Valley, lit as a result of the blunders of successive governments and gleefully stoked from across the line of control, merited some of Akbar's attention.

-INDER MALHOTRA

# Ripping off the Vell and eGangotri Now, the "lion" is on the run, hiding in the West from the fury of his seventh wife Tehmina who, after the

#### Pakistani best seller exposes Ghulam Khar

MY FEUDAL LORD by TEHMINA DURRANI Pages: 365; Price: not stated



I first saw Ghulam Mustafa Khar at the Indepen-Pakistan dence Day function at Islamabad in 1990. Benazir Bhutto's Pakistán Peoples Party-of which he was supposed to be a

kingpin-had just been dismissed by a presidential diktat and a new caretaker anti-Bhutto cabinet was installed. Khar was in it, sitting in the front row, the centre of attraction.

What drew attention was not the act of his defection. But the fact that he had, in tow, Ayesha Butt, a smashing 23-year-old divorcee from Lahorenow his eighth wife. Soon after the flag

hoisting ceremony, the uniformed schoolgirls who had come to sing the national anthem made a beeline for the Khars, for autographs. Someone behind me then remarked: "Watch him, He may just be choosing his ninth wife.'

Such is the mystique of Khar, rumoured to be in his mid-50s, and hailed as the subcontinent's most celebrated Casanova, He has flitted

from positions of power-cabinet minister, governor of Punjab-as frequently as he has switched from one young wife to another. His "lionhearted" exploits would personify the fantasies of any Punjabi. Predictably, his fans call him Sher-e-Punjab.



SHEKHAR GUPTA

Khar with eighth wife Ayesha (above); and her predecessor Tehmina

TEHMINA DURRANI

## "I have thrown the first stone"

DRESSED in a white attire and silver jewellery, Tehmina Durrani, 37, sits in her Gulberg locality house at Lahore in a living room boasting a sheikh's ransom in antique rugs and talks to Features Editor SHEKHAR GUPTA. Excerpts:

Why the book: Behind this facade of sham mod-

ernism, there are tight limitations on our women. Someone had to break out. I have thrown that first stone.

Why the explicit details:

To underline the attitude of the feudal towards women, servants. If he can treat his own women this way, how will he treat the nation?

Credibility of Indian links: I was his wife for 15 years. It is all true, unless the man is a total liar, or years of marriage, has decided to tell all, scorned not just by his eighth marriage but also his "affair" with her sister Adila which apparently began when she was all of 13. There are other, other women, including our Zeenat Aman. Khar emerges as a man of many moods. Once, while in jail for plotting to kill Zia, he admonishes Tehmina for coming to see him without a dupatta. Later, he rapes her in the cell itself, He

strips and beats her at the drop of a fork on the dining table. Then rapes her while the stitches haven't healed from her breast. surgery.

In a tome often weighed down by utter O-levels kind of trite-"the tumour was benign, Mustafa was malignant"-Tehmina makes some startling revelations about Khar's links with

India's RAW in a plot to overthrow Zia and the Pakistanis seem to be taking it seriously. The book has sold several prints, mostly in the blackmarket. Tehmina's tales also rip the stereotyped conservative Islamic facade of Pakistani high society and reveal the sleazy underbelly of its subterranean jet-set.

Tehmina plans to write a series of short stories on the life and trauma of a famous "feudal" woman. No wonder the Lahore Police guard her house round-the-clock. —SHEKHAR GUPTA

schizophrenic, or both. How can you brush aside a man who was so high up? It has implications for Pakistan's security.

Khar's reaction:

The feudal in him is shocked a woman could do it. At the SAARC summit banquet, Benazir asked him: "Mustafa uncle, is it true that Tehmina is writing a book about you?" Mustafa, red in the face, said: "Over my dead body." Now that the book's here, he has fled to the West.

What has she gained:

When I went to divorce him, he said: "You are a nobody now. As Tehmina Khar, people talked to you. Tehmina Durrani, people will make you wait in their ante rooms." Can people ignore me now?

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# What's Next?

o, what's next? That is, on the entertainment agenda. Five months into 1991,

TARUN J. TEJPAL

by a barrage of information, the deafening breakers of trivia drowning out the serious.

This is great, this was fun, but what's next?

and much that traipsed on the highwire under the ublic eye has slipped into the steadily deepening abyss of orgetfulness. Ram has retired into the wings. Bangladesh's atery woes no longer even merit dismal mention in the aside pages of papers—the world's attention sauntering n while the tragedy survives. And Rajiv Gandhi is dead. for as purveyors of Shakespeare would remark, more alive han when he was alive. Given an inordinate 15 days to ravel, the sympathy wave has ebbed away. Collective nemory is clearly a bullet train, speeding into a kaleido-A&M corcopic night of ever-changing images and sensations.

The year's opening item, pouring down from satellites, nodern-day's omniscient god, like manna from heaven, rtlsing strate elied its initial promise. On January 16, the Gulf had the vorld twiddling knobs and punching slim remotes as if the ransistor and TV had been invented on the 15th. For almost

week mankind rode the rackling airwaves, charged vith a sense of participation in oned profess pocalyptic events. Then the oltage coursing forth from the nains dwindled: the endless lights of the birds of prey, the hunderbolts and Jaguars, bean to dull; the relentless fallng of their explosive eggs acuired the monotony of ropical rain; the spelling of chwarzkopf began to fade rom memory.

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Suddenly there was Hum vith Amitabh Bachchan denanding a chumma from a ranslucently wet Kimi Katkar, hile jeering extras flung fake eer froth into the air. Fleetigly, Rajiv held centrestage

ith a customary noh performance, singing while Chandra hekhar danced. Then that impresario of the con, handraswami, put in a guest appearance, livening up natters. But only a wee bit. The froth flattened fast; the udience turned a profile to the asinine goings-on; their ntertainment value proved to be of the minimal.

In modern parlance, in a sensation-crazed world, the ntertainment potential of a person diminishes in direct roportion to the number of appearances he puts in ithout creating a stir. So Khashoggi without a globalzed scandal in his valise is boring; Arun Shourie without eliance impaled on his pen, drudgery; and Pamella Bordes Bali without an editor on the sands, passe.

The theme song is neither success nor progress. The scovery shoots up on the wings of success, it bores us; the Linhallenger vaporises in a ball of flame, we are enthralled. New Delhi he Punjab Police foils a terrorist attempt at slaughter, we 71318 of p the page; a time device blows an SP through the ceiling his office, we are mesmerised.

What the world hungers after, with wide open maw and as a separa solttomless gullet, is sensation. And the threshold of polensation rises like an eternally incoming tide, swept forth

Some two decades ago Andy Warhol predicted no more than 15 minutes of fame for everyone in the future. His comment was not so much on the quality of greatness the coming generations would flaunt, as on the whittling down of mankind's attention span. Nothing would stun us for long; nothing enchant us forever. Sex scandals, medical scams, industrial ripoffs, nuclear espionage, tinpot dictators, insurgencies, everything would grip for but a passing moment and then pale. If the Gulf war had lasted six years like the great war the world would have died of boredom.

So the media churns it out. The TV clips get crisper; the newspaper headlines bigger; the language racier. Mandal, mandir, Lanka, Punjab, Kashmir race by on a circular conveyor belt fixing our eye every now and then; and then less and less. As events nip by on each other's heels, their

Illustration by PRANAB DUTTA

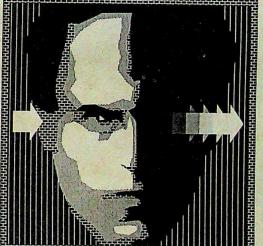
gravity keeps dwindling. You want to transfix my attention? Don't give me 'Sonia takes over Congress(I)'. Give 'Priyanka becomes Congress(I) president'. So Test cricket becomes instant cricket. And leisurely cinema gives way to hectic, with directors decreeing a diet of a climax-a-minute. Raj Kapoor tramped his way through films with song on lip; Bachchan fights, sings, dances, drinks, loves, laments, all at once, and still the audience shuffles with restlessness. Perhaps it is tedium, above all, that fuels Alvin Toffler's change at an accelerating rate.

In this craving for the evernew, reality chips in to help. It

contrives to get increasingly bizarre. You quell small pox. AIDS pops up; you open universities, people start worshipping bricks; you call off the Cold War, you end up going to war. So bizarre, that as Norman Mailer once said, writers of fiction find their imaginations prostrate before reality. To survive, fiction becomes magical. Else it sticks so close to reality as to capture its ludicrousness. Tom Wolfe narrates Emile Zola researching for his novel on miners, Germinal. Underground, one day, Zola saw a big workhorse dragging a load. Amazed at how it came up and down the miner's bucket every day, Zola made inquiries. The horse, he learnt, had entered the mine many years back as a foal, remained subterranean all his life, grown blind, and would be buried there when he died. The imagination bows in obeisance.

And the media becomes magical. It washes over us with a cataract of sensation. Which we shake dry even before our pores permit it permeation. A hung Parliament is rung in. Yes? The BJP, Janata Dal, and Congress(I) get 160 seats each. So? No one agrees to align with anyone else. Then? Morarji Desai totters forth, atremble like an aspen leaf, to be coronated as the country's consensus candidate.

Wonderful vaudeville. But, what's next?



JUNE 30, 1991 . INDIA TODAY 151



Deepika: finding her Ram

#### **Engaging Act**

 Sita has finally found her real-life Ram. In the avatar of cosmetics kingpin Hemant Topivala. Taking a breather from the hectic pace of electioneering, smallscreen goddess Deepika Chikhalia, 26-the BIP candidate from the Baroda parliamentary constituencygot engaged to the Bombay industrialist at a venue that was kept a closely-guarded secret. The engagement seems to have been dogged by controversy from the word go. The prophets of doom predicted the end of

her budding politi- SHANKAR cal career. Many leaders of the BJP who forced her on political centrestage from her post-Ramayan days of obscurity. feel that their star candidate's engagement might result in a political vanvas for her. But others were optimistic. saying that she might get some more "votes in dahej" from the electorate. Due to pressure from the party there was

tized by Arya Samaj Foundation of the engagement but romance finally won over realpolitik.

#### **Holy Habit**

For Reverend Marathakavalley David, 40, it was a call from the divine. And the Theology graduate couldn't wait to don the habit as she was handed the keys of the Nediakala CSI Church recently, to assume its charge. The rev-

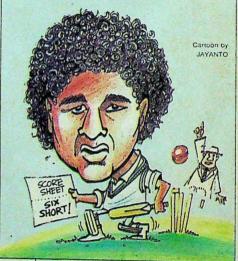
erend seemed truly blessed: though all her male colleagues had been ordained vears ago, she had to fight a decade-long battle before she was made the first woman priest in Kerala. All along the state clergy argued that the Bible said women were "unclean and unfit for the job". Says the triumphant reverend: "I was keen on becoming a priest ever since my youth. Now the only problem is managing family affairs." With help from husband Reverend D. David that shouldn't be tough.

Marathakavallev: all in the family



#### Six Symbol

 He was just a sixer away from another landmark. But for Sachin Tendulkar, 18, studies aren't quite cricket. Busy swatting at deliveries, the new Little Master forgot to swot-falling his HSC exam by six marks. Says his dad: "He almost got through."



Mehta: end of an affair

feel very proud of what I'm leaving behind-one of the world's finest orchestras."

#### Name Dropper

The succession struggle between the two heirs appar ent to the Express empire is finally over. Recently Vivek Khaitan an nounced his adop tion by 'nana Ram nath Goenkaji' and changed his sur name to Goenka Grandson Mano Sonthalia seems to have been edged out. Said Vivek "Express will con tinue with the val

ues, for which it was founded." What else?

Vivek: granddad's favourit



CLARIC

#### Swan Song

 The love affair is over. After 13 years as music director of the New York Philharmonic, Zubin Mehta has left. "At dinner-time, chillies replace the baton," headlined The New York Times, running Zubin's Parsi recipes on its front page. The Philharmonic itself toasted its longest-time leader with symbolic gifts: an original page from Mahler's Ninth Symphony and a replica of the baton used by its founder. Mehta graciously sponded: "I'm leaving with a



sense of great fulfilment. I

For the gracious people

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